SIR CHRISTOPHER

BY MAUD WILDER GOODWIN

Susan Hyde

Sir Christopher

LAD
BETTY
Pyle

Sir Christopher

A Romance of a Maryland Manor in 1644

BY

MAUD WILDER GOODWIN

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Illustrated by

HOWARD PYLE, AND OTHER ARTISTS

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TO

B. W. B.

AND

F. P. B.

Preface

ON a bluff of the Maryland coast stand a church, a school, a huddle of gravestones, and an obelisk raised to the memory of Leonard Calvert. These alone mark the site of St. Mary's, once the capital of the Palatinate.

It is near this little town, about the middle of the seventeenth century, that my story begins, among the feuds then raging between Catholic and Protestant, Cavalier and Roundhead, Marylander and Virginian. The Virginians of that day were but a generation removed from the pioneers who suffered in the massacre of 1622; and the sons and daughters of those early settlers whose lives were traced in "The Head of a Hundred" * appear in the present romance.

The adventures of Romney Huntoon, of the Brents, and, most of all, of Christopher Neville and Elinor Calvert, furnish the material of my story; but I venture to hope that the reader will feel beneath the incidents and adventures that throbbing of the human heart which has chiefly interested me.

* Published 1895.

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SIR CHRISTOPHER

CHAPTER I

ROBIN HOOD'S BARN

THROUGH the January twilight a sail-boat steered its course by the light of a fire which blazed high in the throat of the chimney at St. Gabriel's Manor. Within the hall, circled by the light from the fire, a Danish hound stretched its lazy length on the floor, and, pillowing his head against the dog's body, lay a boy eight or nine years old.

He was a plain laddie, with a freckled nose, a wide mouth, and round apple cheeks over which flaxen curls tumbled in confusion. His big eyes, the redeeming feature of the face, were just now fixed upon the shadows cast by the motion of his joined hands on the wall. At length the lips parted over a row of baby teeth with a gap in the centre, through which the little tongue showed blood-red, as the boy laughed long and loud.

"Thee, Knut!" he lisped, with that occasional slip of the letter s which was a lingering trick of babyhood and cost him much shame,

"is not that broad-shouldered shadow like Couthin Giles? And the tall one, — why, 't is the very image of Father Mohl! And the short one ith Couthin Mary. Look how she bows as she goes before the father! And what a fine cowl I have made of my kerchief!"

Unconscious of observation as the boy was, he was being closely watched from two directions. In the shadow of the settle by the fire sat a tonsured priest, holding before him a breviary over the top of which he was contemplating the boy on the floor; opposite the priest, on the landing of the stairs, a woman leaned on the balustrade, following with absorbed interest every movement of the chubby hands, and every expression of the childish face, which bore a burlesqued resemblance to her own. After a moment the woman gathered her skirts closer about her and stealing down the winding stair, crept up behind the boy and clasped both hands playfully over his eyes.

"Who is it?" she asked gaily.

"Mother!" cried the child, wrenching himself free only to jump up and throw himself into the arms outstretched to receive him. "Didst fancy I was like to mithtake thy hands?" he asked. "No, faith! Father Mohl's hands are long and cold, and Couthin Mary's fingers are stiff and hard, no more like to thine than a potato to a puff-ball."

"Hush, Cecil! Hush, little ingrate!" whis-

pered the mother, clapping her hands this time over his lips. "I would not thy Cousin Mary heard that speech for a silver crown." Nevertheless, she smiled.

Elinor Calvert, as she stood there with one hand on her son's shoulder and the other bending back his face, looked like some sunshiny goddess. Her dress well became her height. She wore a long petticoat of figured damask, beneath a robe of green stuff. Her bodice, long and pointed, fitted the figure closely, and the flowing sleeves of green silk fell back from round white arms. Around her neck was a string of pearls, bearing a heart-shaped miniature set also in pearls, and held to the left side of her bodice by a brooch of diamonds. Her figure was tall, and crowned by a head nobly proportioned and upheld by a white pillar of throat. Her features were heavily moulded, especially the lips and chin. The golden hair which swept her brow softened its marked width, yet the impression conveyed by the face might have been cold had it not been for the softness of the eyes under their fringe of dark lashes.

In spite of the flashes of gaiety which marked her intercourse with her son, the prevailing expression of Mistress Calvert's face was sad. Rumor said that there was enough to account for this in the story of her brief married life in

England, for Churchill Calvert was a spendthrift and a gambler, who died leaving his widow with her little son a year old, and no other support than the income of a slender dowry.

In those dark days of her early widowhood Elinor received a letter from her husband's kinsman, Lord Baltimore.

"I know your pride too well," he wrote, "to offer you any help; but you must not deny my right to provide for my godson. Money with me is scarce, but land is plenty, and I offer you in Cecil's name a grant of seven thousand acres in Maryland. It is covered with virgin forest. Like the old outlaw you must needs store your grain in caves and stable your horses and cattle under the trees; wherefore I shall counsel Cecil to name his manor *Robin Hood's Barn*. Should you be willing to remove thither, make up your mind speedily, for at the sailing of a ship now in harbor, our cousins the Brents start for the new world, and would rejoice to have you and Cecil in their keeping."

Baltimore was right in foreseeing the struggle in Elinor's mind between pride and love for her child; but he was also right in predicting that love would triumph, and Elinor thanked him and Heaven daily for this asylum, where her boy could grow up safe from the temptations of London which had wrecked his father's life.

As she bent over Cecil to-night, her heart was full of contending emotions. She and her boy were safely sheltered under the roof of her dear cousin, Mary Brent, Cecil would soon be old enough to take possession of the manor at Cecil Point, the future was apparently bright with promise; yet she was conscious of some unsatisfied hunger of the heart, and, deeper than that, of a sense of some impending grief; but she was a woman of shaken nerves easily sunk in melancholy.

"Hark!" cried Cecil, suddenly pulling himself away from his mother's arms, — "I hear the sound of footsteps outside." At the same moment Mary Brent came slipping down the stairs.

"Elinor," she said with a little nervousness, "Giles was expecting a friend to-night."

"Ah?" said Elinor, indifferently.

"Yes; 't is a pity he was called to St. Mary's in such haste, for the friend comes on business."

"Perchance he may tarry till Giles returns."

"I hope so, — but, Elinor, — this business concerns thee."

"*Me!*"

"Ay, the new-comer is one who would fain have a lease of the manor at Cecil Point."

"Robin Hood's Barn? Now, Mary, have I not told thee and Giles that I would hear of no such plan? I am a woman of affairs and can well

manage till Cecil is old enough to take control. Another six months we shall rest under your roof, — then, dear cousin, we must be gone to our own."

Mary Brent laid her hand upon the younger woman's arm.

"Vex me not, Elinor," she said, "by speaking so. Let it be settled that this is your home. 'T is not kind to talk of leaving me. Besides, you could not live upon your lands without an arm to protect you, stout enough for defence and for toil."

"We will hire laborers."

"Common laborers are not enough. There must be a man with head to direct as well as hands to work."

Cecil, who had stood by an eager listener, suddenly stripped up the sleeve of his jerkin and bared his arm.

"Feel that!" he cried, doubling his elbow till the muscle stood out. Mary Brent laughed as she laid her hand upon it.

"Truly, 't is a pretty muscle. Yet will it be better for a few more years of growth. Say, Elinor, wilt thou take this man for thy tenant? Giles has left the lease already drawn for thee, as Cecil's guardian, to sign when thou hast settled terms with the man. Giles says he is as fine a fellow as hath yet set foot in Maryland. He is

a gentleman, moreover, and hath a title, having been knighted for gallant service in that ill-fated Cadiz expedition some years since."

"Who is the man?"

"Neville is his name, Sir Christopher Neville."

"Christopher Neville!" repeated Elinor, slowly, but the shuffling of snow-covered feet upon the stepping-stones outside put an end to further speech. Knut began to bark.

"Give over barking, thou naughty dog! Hie away to the kitchen and make way for thy betters!" said Mary Brent, making a feint at taking down a stick from over the fireplace. The dog continued barking, and Cecil began to laugh.

"Hush, Cecil," said his mother; "where are thy manners? Make haste to open the door!"

Cecil ran to the door and flinging it wide let in a great gust of wind. The light from within fell upon a man wrapped in a heavy cloak and wearing a broad-brimmed cavalier hat with plumes at the side.

"Come in, good thir!" cried Cecil, "before you are frozen stiff;" and he led the way to the fire, before which Mary Brent stood with outstretched hand of welcome.

"My brother Giles is called to St. Mary's; but he left a welcome for you, and bade us keep you without fail till his return."

The new-comer bowed low above Mistress

Brent's hand. He was a tall, plain man, approaching middle age, with keen eyes, and dents in his face as if Time had nicked it with his sickle. Around his firm-set mouth, hovered a smile that had summered and wintered many disappointments.

"Elinor, let me make Sir Christopher Neville known to thee! My cousin, Elinor Calvert, Sir Christopher, the mistress of Cecil Point."

With this, Elinor, who had stood still as a statue, moved slowly forward and held out her hand. Neville kissed it.

The priest who had sat in the shadow of the settle, a silent observer of the scene before him, rose, now that all eyes were turned toward the stranger, and glided quietly out at the further doorway, murmuring, "*Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium de manibus meis ad laudem et gloriam nominis sui.*"

"Come, Cecil!" said Mary Brent. "Let us make ready the hot posset. I have the ale on the fire a-heating and the milk and sugar and spices ready, and with a sippet of bread 't is wonderful sustaining. Sir Christopher, you will find its sting comforting after your long journey."

As she drew the child after her she whispered to Elinor, "To business, Cousin! Tell him he may have the manor for the clearing of the land and half the harvest!"

The door closed behind her. Elinor Calvert and Christopher Neville stood looking at each other across the width of the fireplace. A long silence followed, broken at last by Elinor's impulsive speech.

"Why art thou come hither?"

"Maryland is free to all."

"Why dost thou seek to become my tenant?"

"I have a fancy for the land at Cecil Point."

"Thy answers ring false. Tell me the real reason in a word."

"As well in one word as in a thousand, since the word is *Thou*."

The flush mounted to Elinor Calvert's brow and she stood playing with the tassels of her girdle, finding nothing to say in answer.

"Yes," Neville went on, "for thy sake I am come hither out of England. For thy sake I came this night that I might have speech of thee. For this reason I would fain be thy tenant, that I might add one strong arm for thy defence in the dangers which threaten."

"Thou art a friend indeed."

"Ay, a true friend, since thou wilt have me for naught beyond. It is ten years since I asked thee wouldst thou have me for a husband, and thou didst deny me, and wed Calvert. For four years I strove as an honest man should to put thee out of my mind. I was fain to believe I had

succeeded, when the news of thy freedom reached me; then the old love I had counted dead rose up stronger than ever, rose up out of the grave where I had laid it as in a trance, rose up and bade me never again cheat myself into the belief that I and it could be put asunder."

The man paused for breath, so shaken was he by the force of his passion.

Elinor Calvert looked at him in terror, unable to break by word or movement the spell under which he held her. He made a stride closer, and grasped her hand.

"What stands between us?" he asked, holding her eyes with his, those penetrating eyes that had the power to pierce all disguises, to rend all shams to tatters, "Norse een like grey gos-hawks." Most eyes only look — Neville's *saw*. The woman before him felt evasions impossible, subterfuges of no avail.

"Your faith," she answered.

"You cared a little for me, then, in the old days?"

"I did," she answered, like one in a trance bending to the will of the questioner. As she spoke she unconsciously laid her hand upon the diamond crescent at her breast.

His eyes followed her motion and he colored high, for he saw that it was the brooch he had sent her at her marriage. She saw that he saw,

and she too blushed, a painful blush that stained her face crimson and ran up to lose itself in the shadow of her hair.

"I know who have stood in the way of thy loving me; but let them no longer come between thee and me, or their tonsured heads shall answer for it to my sword."

Elinor frowned, and Neville saw that he was endangering his cause.

"Forgive my impetuous speech!" said he. "Forget that the words were spoken."

"I cannot."

If Elinor had told the whole truth she would have added, "I do not wish to."

"Then at least put them aside and deal with me in cold business terms as though we were the strangers thy cousins believe us to be. Wilt thou have me for thy tenant on shares — three quarters of the harvest to go to thee and one quarter to me?"

"Tenant of mine thou shalt never be. I could not be so unfair, to let thee give thy life for me and get nothing in return!"

"To let me do the thing I have set my heart on and get in return a sight of thee once in the year. That is to make one three-hundred-and sixty-fifth of every year blessed."

"My tenant," said Elinor, slowly, "thou canst not be."

Neville bent his head.

"But—"

"Blessed be but—! But what?"

"But—perhaps—Cecil's."

"Ay, that is better!" said Neville, smiling a little; "that will be best, for then there will be no favor on either side, and as the lad grows older he and I can deal together as man to man."

"Oh, it is such a relief to my mind!" sighed Elinor.

"And to mine," quoth Neville.

"It is not the same thing as being my tenant?"

"Not at all—quite different. And thou wilt come with Cecil to see how the land fares from time to time?"

"Why, that were but business."

"Truly to do aught else were treason to thy son's interest, and by and by when the house is built and the title of Robin Hood's Barn suits the manor no more, thou and he will come to visit me there?"

"That could not be—"

"No, I feared that was asking too much," Neville said humbly, "but at least thou wilt let me have the boy?"

"How good thou art!"

"*Good!*—I to thee? Shall I tell thee whose picture dwells in my soul by day and night,

Elinor?" There was a curious vibration in Neville's voice, as if memory were pulling out the stops of an organ.

"Ay, tell me," said Elinor, tremulously, in a voice scarce above a whisper.

"'T is that of a girl in a robe of green like the one thou wearest this night — ay, and floating sleeves like thine, whereby she caught the name she bears in my heart."

A softness stole into Elinor's eyes and the flush of girlhood rose to her cheek.

"Ah," Neville went on. "Dost thou remember that day in the Somerset wood, and how I gave thee the name of Lady Greensleeves, and how I sang thee the dear old ballad, thou sitting on the stone wall and I leaning against the great chestnut-tree?"

"Nay, 't was not a chestnut — 't was an oak, for I do recall the acorns that lay about thy feet as I listened with my eyes cast down."

"And I stood looking at thy lashes, scarce knowing whether I would have them lift or not, as they lay against the rose of thy cheek."

"How long ago it all was!" sighed Elinor.

"Yet when thou dost speak and look like that it seems but yesterday. Oh, my dearest — "

Neville, carried beyond his prudence, drew nearer and was about to fall upon his knees before her, when he saw the door open to admit

Mistress Brent, followed by a servant bearing a steaming bowl of posset.

How much of his speech had been overheard, he knew not. Manlike he found it hard to steer his bark in an instant from deep waters into the shallows of conversation; but Elinor took the helm and dashed into the safe channel.

"Mary, thou art come in good time to help me to argue terms with a too generous tenant."

Mary Brent came forward smiling, but a little bewildered.

Elinor took the goblets from the tray and filled them with the posset. "Drink!" she cried gaily. "Drink both of you to the prosperity of Cecil Manor, and I will drink a health to Cecil's tenant, Sir Christopher Neville."

With this, she swept a deep courtesy, and rising, clinked her goblet against Neville's.

At the same moment Cecil burst upon them from the stairs, his golden curls topped by Master Neville's brown cavalier hat, and the heavy cloak sweeping the floor after him as he walked.

"Good evening, madam!" he cried, sweeping off his hat before Mary Brent with a droll imitation of Neville's manner.

"Small boys," said Elinor, "wax bold as bed hour draws near. Ask pardon of Sir Christopher and be off to thy bed."

"Thou wilt come with me?"

"Not to-night, sweetheart; we have a guest—"

"Guest or no guest, I go not without thee," cried the child. "'T is the first time since our coming thou didst ever deny me. I should lie awake and see bogies an thou didst not tuck in the counterpane about me with thine own hands."

"I pray thee," said Neville, under his breath, "grant the boy his wish. Let not his acquaintance and mine begin with misliking."

At this, Cecil, who till now had hung back and glowered at the stranger from behind his mother's skirts, came forward with the grace of the Calvert line, and stretching out his hand frankly to Neville, said: "I thank you, thir; I am glad you are come to stay with us." As his mother led him away to bed he turned on the landing and kissed his hand to the new-comer. Then, with a sudden relapse into the barbarism of childhood, he dropped on hands and knees and climbed the remaining stairs in that fashion — growling like a wolf as he went. Ten minutes later the group in the hall heard him chanting an evening hymn, and his voice had the high, unearthly sweetness, the clear, angelic note of those who stand before the Throne.

CHAPTER II

ST. GABRIEL'S AND ST. INIGO'S

WHEN Elinor returned from Cecil's bedside, Neville detected traces of weeping in the flush of her cheek and the heaviness of her eyelids ; but her manner was gracious and marked by a gaiety which would have led one who did not know her well to believe that she was as light-hearted as the boy upstairs.

The candles on the supper-table shone on a strangely assorted group. At the head of the board sat Mistress Brent. She was a demure little lady, like a sleek white cat, full of domestic impulses, clinging to her hearthstone and purring away life, content to rub against the feet of those whom she counted her superiors. Her placid face beamed with joy at the thought that her roof was found worthy to shelter the holy Fathers from St. Inigo's. Yet, even as she rejoiced, she remembered with some misgivings a conversation she had held with her brother Giles before his setting out. "Mary," he had said, "it is

rumored throughout the province that thy house is headquarters for the Jesuits."

"Brother," she had answered, "my house is open to all who seek its shelter, and shall I shut its doors to the priests of our Holy Church?"

"There is no arguing with women," her brother had said, with a testy shrug of his shoulders. "Thou must needs turn every question of policy into an affair of pious sentiment. Baltimore is as good a Catholic as thou; but he is first of all an Englishman, and second, the ruler of this province, wherein he hath promised fair play to men of all creeds; and he will not have the reins of control wrenched from his hands by the Jesuits, who hold themselves free of the common law, and answerable to none but the tribunals of the Church."

"I know naught of questions of policy, Giles, as thou sayst; but while I have a roof over my head, I will take for the motto of my house the words of Scripture: 'Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'"

When this motto is posted over the lintel there will never be a lack of footmarks on the threshold. Many were the guests who came to try the hospitality of St. Gabriel's Manor, and no visitors were more frequent than the Jesuits, those brave men who for the sake of their faith had crossed the sea, braved the perils of the wilderness, and

planted a mission near St. Mary's which they christened St. Inigo's.

On Mary Brent's right hand this evening sat one of these priests, Father White, whose shrewd eyes shone with love to God and man, whose heart yearned over the sinner as it bowed before the saint, and whose life was at the service of the order of Ignatius Loyola. His features were delicately cut, and the skin of a transparency which recalled the alabaster columns at San Marco with the light shining through them. So translucent to the soul behind seemed his fragile frame.

His mulatto servant, Francisco, stood at the back of his chair and ministered to his wants with loving care.

Opposite Father White sat Christopher Neville, and one at least of the company found him good to look upon, despite his square jaw and the sabre-cut over the left eye. But for the particularity of his dress he might have conveyed the impression of rude strength, but his black velvet doublet fitted close and gave elegance to the heavily built figure, and the shirt that broke out above the waist was adorned with hand-wrought ruffles of an exquisite fineness.

Notwithstanding his plainness, his personality carried conviction. The whole man made himself felt in the direct glance and the firm hand-clasp. His words, too, had a stirring quality. People

differed, disputed, denounced; but they always listened. He often roused antagonism, but seldom irritation. It is not those who oppose, but those who fail to comprehend, who exasperate, and Neville had above all the gift of comprehension. Yet with this intellectual perception was combined a singular imperviousness to social atmosphere. So that in his presence one had often the feeling of being a piece of china in a bull pasture; but, in his wildest assault, the slightest droop of the lip, the faintest appeal for sympathy reduced him to the gentleness of a lamb.

"I would he were of our communion," thought Father White, studying him.

Near Neville sat a younger priest, the same who had watched Elinor Calvert and her son from the shadow of the settle. His aspect was more humble than that of his superior. He bowed lower as he passed the crucifix rudely fastened to the chimney breast; his eyes were seldomer raised, and he mumbled more scraps of the mass over his food; but all this outward show of holiness failed to convince. It was like the smell of musk which hints of less desirable scents, to be overpowered rather than cleansed. His narrow gray eyes, cast down as they were, found opportunity to scrutinize Elinor Calvert closely as she sat by the side of Neville. Set a man, a priest, and a

woman to watch each other — the priest will catch the man; but the woman will catch the priest.

"Prithee try this wine, Father!" said Mary Brent to the venerable priest on her right, holding toward him a cup of sparkling red-brown wine. "'T is made in our own press from the wild grapes that grow hereabout, and Giles has christened it 'St. Gabriel's Blessing.'"

"Tempt me not!" said Father White, smiling but pushing the goblet away. "I have not spent my life studying the *Spiritual Experiences* of Saint Ignatius without profiting by that holy man's injunction to regard the mouth as the portal of the soul. The wine industry is important, but I fear the effect of drinking on the natives. I have seen a chief take blasphemous swigs of the consecrated wine at the sacrament, and at a wedding half the tribe are drunken."

"Prithee, tell me more of these missions among the natives," Elinor said to Father Mohl, bending the full splendor of her glance upon him; "are they not fraught with deadly peril?"

"To the body, doubtless."

"'T would be to the soul too if I were engaged in them, for I have such hatred of hardship that I should spend my time bewailing the task I had undertaken."

"Nay, daughter, for ere thou wert called to the

trial thou wouldst have faced the tests that do lead up to it as the *via dolorosa* to Calvary. Before we take the final vows we undergo three probations, the first devoted to the mind, and the last a year of penance and privation, that we may test our strength and learn to forego all that hampers our spiritual progress; this is called *the school of the heart.*"

"Would there were such for a woman!"

"There is," said Neville from the other side; "but it is where she rules instead of being ruled."

Elinor turned and looked at him with that lack of comprehension which a woman knows how to assume when she understands everything. "He loves her," thought the priest; "but she only loves his love."

Yet, knowing how many matches have been brought about by this state of things, Father Mohl set himself to study Neville. He found him reserved in general, with the suavity and self-command of a man of the world, but outspoken under irritation.

"We must make him angry," thought the priest.

Seeing that Neville was a Protestant, he began relating the deeds wrought by priests.

"Do you recall, Father White," he said, "how the natives brought their chief to die in the mission house, and how Father Copley laid on him a

sacred bone, and how the sick man recovered, and went about praising God and the fathers?"

"I do remember it well," Father White answered.

"Yes," continued the younger priest, "and I recall how Brother Fisher found a native woman sick unto death. He instructed her in the catechism, laid a cross on her breast, and behold, the third day after, the woman rose entirely cured, and throwing a heavy bag over her shoulder walked a distance of four leagues."

"Wonderful! wonderful!" murmured Mary Brent.

Neville was irritated, and thought to turn Father Mohl's tales to ridicule. Whom the gods would destroy they first make funny.

"Did you ever hear of the miracle of the buttered whetstone?" he asked.

"Pray you tell it," said Father Mohl, with his ominous smile.

"Why, there was a friar once in London who did use to go often to the house of an old woman; but ever when he came she hid all the food in the house, having heard that friars and chickens never get enough."

If only Neville had looked at Elinor! but he steered as straight for destruction as any rudderless bark in a storm on a rocky coast.

"This day," he went on, "the friar asked the goodwife had she any meat."

"'Devil a taste!' she said.

"'Well,' quoth the friar, 'have you a whetstone?'

"'Yes.'

"'Marry, I 'll eat that.'

"So when she had brought the whetstone, he bade her fetch a frying-pan, and when he had it, he set it on the fire and laid the whetstone in it.

"'Cock's body!' said the poor wife, 'you 'll burn the pan!'

"'No! no!' quoth the friar; 'you shall see a miracle. It shall not burn at all if you bring me some eggs.'

"So she brought the eggs and he dropped them in the pan.

"'Quick!' cried he, 'some butter and milk, or pan and egg will both burn.'

"So she ran for the butter, and the friar took salt from the table and threw it into the pan with butter and eggs and milk, and when all was done he set the pan on the table, whetstone and all, and calling the woman, he bade her tell her friends how she had witnessed a miracle, and how a holy friar had made a good meal of a fried whetstone."

Father Mohl was now angered in his turn.

Priests, having surrendered the love of women, cling with double tenacity to their reverence.

"A merry tale, sir," said he, smoothly, "though better suited to the ale-house than the lady's table, and more meet for the ears of scoffers than of believers — Daughter," turning to Mary Brent, "you were amazed a moment since at the wonders God hath wrought through the hands of His chosen ones; but the judgments of the Lord are no less marvellous than His mercies. There was a Calvinist settled at Kent Fort who made sport over our holy observances."

Elinor Calvert colored and looked from under her eyelids at Neville. But he went on plying his knife and fork. "If he were angry," she said to herself, "he would not eat." But in this she mistook the nature of man, judging it by her own.

"Yes," continued Father Mohl, "although, thanks to our prayers, the wretch was rescued from drowning on the blessed day of Pentecost, yet he showed thanks neither to God nor to us. Coming upon a company offering their vows to the saints, he began impudently to jeer at these religious men, and flung back ribald jests as he pushed his boat from shore. The next morning his boat was found overturned in the Bay, and he was never heard of more."

Neville looked up. "I am glad," he said, "to

be able to supply a happier ending to your story. The man, as it happens, was picked up by an outward-bound ship, and is alive and well in England to-day."

"You knew the blasphemer, then?"

"I know the man of whom you speak — a fine fellow he is, and the foe of all liars and hypocrites."

"Ah, I forgot," answered Father Mohl, smoothly, "you are not one of us."

"Not I," cried Neville, hotly; "I have cast in my lot with honest men."

"Say no more," said Mohl, satisfied, "lest thou too blaspheme and die! *Misereatur tui, Omnipotens Deus!*" Having thus achieved the difficult task of giving offence and granting forgiveness at the same time, Father Mohl smiled and leaned back content.

Neville, on his side, was smiling too, thinking, poor fool, that the victory lay with him; but looking round he saw Elinor raise her wine cup to her lips, and looking closer he saw two tears rise in her eyes, swell over the lids, and slip into the wine cup. Instantly he cursed himself for a stupid brute. "Madam," he said, speaking low in Elinor's ear, so that she alone could hear him, "thou art wasteful. Cleopatra cast only one pearl into her wine-cup, and thou hast dropped two."

At the same moment a little white figure appeared in the doorway.

"May I come in for nutth?" asked a small voice.

"Cecil, for shame! Go back to bed this instant!" cried his mother; but Neville drew a stool between him and Mary Brent, and silently motioned to Cecil to come and occupy it.

"The child should be taught obedience through discipline," said Father Mohl, looking with raised eyebrows toward Elinor. Cecil cowered against the wall; but kept his eyes upon the coveted seat.

Neville crossed glances with the priest as men cross swords.

"Cecil," he continued, "beg thy mother to heed the petition of a guest and let thee sit here by me for ten little minutes; I will bid thee eat nuts, — so shalt thou practise Father Mohl's precepts of obedience."

Elinor smiled, Neville put out his hand, a strong, nervous hand, and Cecil knew his cause was won.

"Lonely upstairs," he confided to Neville as he helped himself to nuts; "makes me think of bears."

"Bears come not into houses."

"They say not, but the dark looks like a big black one, big enough to swallow house and all. I do not like the dark, do you?"

"I did not when I was your age,—that's sure; but I have seen so many worse things since then—"

"What?"

"Myself, for instance."

"That's silly."

"I think it is."

"Do not say silly things! Mother sends me to bed when I do."

"Is it not silly to fear the dark?"

"Mayhap, but I lie still all of a tremble, and then I seem to hear a growl at the door, and then blood and flesh cannot stand it and I scream for mother. Three or two timeth I scream, and she comes running."

"Wouldst have the bear eat thy mother?"

"Nay, but sure 'nuff he would not. The Dark Bear eateth only little boys."

"Oh, only little boys?"

"Ay, and he beginneth with their toes. Therefore I dare not kneel alone to say my Hail Maries. The Dark Bear is not like God, for God careth only for the heart. Thir Chrithtopher, why doth God care more for the heart than for the head and legs?"

"Come, Cecil," said Elinor's warning voice, "thou art chattering as loud as a tree-toad, and the ten minutes are more than passed. Run up and hide those cold toes of thine under the counterpane!"

"If I go, wilt thou come up after supper to see me?"

"If I can be spared."

"Nay, no *ifs* — ay or no?"

Father Mohl smiled, and his smile was not good to see.

"Is this the flower of that confidence through love which you so much admire, Sir Christopher?"

"No," answered Neville, "only the thorns on its stem; the blossoms are not yet out."

"Ay or no?" repeated the child, oblivious of the discussion going on around him.

"Oh, *ay*, and get thee gone!" cried his mother, thoroughly out of patience with the child and herself and every one else.

Cecil ran round to her seat, hugged her in a stifling embrace, and then pattered out of the room and up the stair, reassuring his timid little heart by saying aloud as he went, "Bearth come not into houseth! Bearth come not into houseth!"

Father Mohl sat with bent head, the enigmatic smile still playing round his lips. At length, making the sign of the cross, he spoke aside to Father White, —

"Have I leave to depart?"

"Go — and *pax tibi!*"

The company rose.

"Father, must thou be gone so soon?"

Mary Brent asked, with hospitable entreaty in her tones.

"I must, my daughter."

"This very night?"

"This very night."

"But the road to St. Mary's is dark and rough."

"Ay, but our feet are used to treading rough roads, and the moon will show the blazed path as clearly as the sun itself."

"Farewell," said Father White. "Bear my greetings to my brothers at St. Inigo's, and charge them that they cease not from their labors till I come."

When Father Mohl passed Neville, Sir Christopher, moved by a sudden compunction, held out his hand. "Hey for St. Mary's!" he exclaimed, with a note of cordiality which if a trifle forced was at least civil.

Father Mohl ignored the outstretched hand, and with his own grasped the crucifix at his breast. The sneer in his smile deepened, and one heard the breath of scorn in his nostrils as he answered, with a meaning glance at Elinor, "The latter part of the Marylanders' battle-cry were perchance honester. Why not make it 'Wives for us all'?"

This passed the bounds of patience, and Neville cast overboard that self-control which is the bal-

last of the soul. His outstretched hand clenched itself into a fist.

"Sir!" he cried, very white about the lips, "if you wore a sword instead of a scapular, we might easily settle our affairs. But since your garb cries 'Sanctuary!' while your tongue doth cut and thrust rapier-like, I'll e'en grant you the victory in the war of words. Good-night, Sir Priest!"

For answer the father only folded his cloak about him and slipped out of the door as quietly as though he were to re-enter in an hour.

Father White followed Mistress Brent to the hall, from the window of which she strove to watch the retreating figure of Father Mohl. Neville thus found himself alone with Elinor Calvert once more. He regarded her with some anxiety, an anxiety justified by her bearing. The full round chin was held an inch higher than its wont, the nostrils were dilated and the eyelids half closed. A wise man would have been careful how he offered a vent for her scorn; but to her lover it seemed that any utterance would be better than this contemptuous silence.

"You are very angry —" ventured Neville, timidly.

"I have cause."

"— and ashamed of me."

"I have a right to be."

"Thank Heaven for that!"

"If you thank Heaven for the shame you cause you are like enough to spend your life on your knees."

"I deprecate your scorn, madam. Yet I cannot take back the saying."

"Make it good, then!"

"Why, so I will. None feel shame save when they feel responsibility. None feel responsibility for those who are neither kith nor kin save where they —"

"Where they what?" flashed Elinor, turning her great angry eyes full upon him.

"Save where they *love*, Mistress Calvert."

It was out now and Neville felt better. Elinor clenched her hands and began an angry retort, and then all of a sudden broke down, and bending her head over the back of the high oak chair, stood sobbing silently.

"I pray you be angry," pleaded Neville; "your wrath was hard to bear; but 't was naught to this."

"Oh, yes," answered Elinor between her sobs, "it is much you care either for my anger or your grief, that the first proof you give of your boasted love is to offend those whom I hold in affection and reverence."

"'T was he provoked me to it," answered Neville, sullenly, "with his tales of my friend

yonder, as honest a fellow as walks the earth. Is a man to sit still and listen in silence to a pack of lies told about his friend?"

"Say no more!" commanded Elinor. "I see a man is bound to bear all things for the man to whom he has professed friendship — nothing for the woman to whom he has professed love."

There was little logic in the argument, but it made its mark, for it was addressed not to the mind but to the heart.

"Forgive me!" cried Neville — which was by far the best thing he could have said.

If a woman has anything to forgive, the granting of pardon is a necessity. If she has nothing to forgive, it is a luxury.

"I do," she murmured.

"Perhaps I was rougher of manner than need was."

"Yet 't was but nature."

"Yes, but nature must be held in check."

Thus did these inconsistent beings oppose each other, each taking the ground occupied a few minutes since by the other, and as hot for the defence as they had been but now for the attack.

Neville seized Elinor's hand and kissed it passionately; then snatching up his hat and cloak he exclaimed, "I will go after Mohl and make my peace. Henceforth I swear what is

dear to you shall be held at least beyond reproach by me."

Elinor turned upon him such a glance that he scarcely dared look upon her lest he be struck blind by the ecstasy of his own soul.

"At last!" he whispered as he passed out into the night.

Was it luck or fate that guided him? Who shall say? Luck is the pebble on which the traveller trips and slides into quicksands or sands of gold. Fate is the cliff against which he leans, or dashes himself to death. Yet the pebble was once part of the cliff.

CHAPTER III

BLESSING AND BANNING

"MOTHER! Moth-*er!*"

It was Cecil's voice on the landing, and Cecil's white nightgowned figure hanging over the balustrade.

"Yes, Poppet, what is it?"

"Thou didtht not come upstairs as thou didtht promise when the nuts were served. . . ."

"Dearest, I could not. I was in talk with Sir Christopher."

"But thou didtht promise, and how oft have I heard thee say, 'A promise is a promise'?"

Elinor started from her chair to go toward the stair; but Father White stayed her with uplifted finger.

"Let me deal with him," he said under his breath; "t'is time the lad learned the difference between the failure which is stuff of the conscience, and that which is the fault of circumstances." Then aloud, "Cecil, wilt thou close thine eyes and come down to me when thou hast counted a hundred?"

"Ay, that will I."

"Without fail?"

"Why, surely! There is naught I would love better than toathting my toeth by the great fire."

"Very well, then; shut thine eyes and begin!"

Cecil counted faithfully to the stroke of a hundred, and then springing to his feet with a shout, started down the stair, but to his surprise the priest was nowhere to be seen. Cecil searched behind the settle and under the table as if one could fancy Father White's stately figure in such undignified hiding-place! At length the child gave up the search and called aloud,—

"Where art thou?"

"Here, in this little room," answered a muffled voice, and Cecil ran to the door only to find it securely fastened by a bolt within.

"Come in," cried the voice.

"I cannot; it ith bolted."

"But you promised —"

"But the door ith fatht."

"What of that? '*A promise is a promise.*'"

By this time Cecil, perceiving that jest and lesson were both pointed at him, stood with quivering lip, ready at a single further word to burst into tears; but the kind father, flinging wide the door, caught him in his arms, saying, "We must not hold each other responsible, my boy, for

promises which God and man can make impossible of fulfilment. We must be gentle and charitable and easy to be entreated for forgiveness; and so good-night to mother, and I will lay thee again in thy trundle-bed."

"Has Sir Christopher Neville left us also?" asked Mary Brent, as Father White came down from Cecil's room and joined her and Elinor at the fire.

"He has."

"A strange man!" said Father White.

Elinor colored.

"Ay," answered Mary Brent; "I cannot make out why Giles hath taken such a liking to him. To me he seems proud and reserved, with something in his tone that suggests that he is turning the company into a jest. For myself I did not see anything droll in his story of the fried whetstone."

Elinor shrugged her shoulders.

"If every man were condemned that told a tale in which others could see nothing droll, we should need a Tyburn Hill here in Maryland."

"Ay, but what 's the use of telling a droll story if it be not droll? I do not understand Sir Christopher."

"I don't think you do."

"I think *I* do."

It was Father White who spoke, and his

shrewd gray eyes were fixed upon Elinor, who turned to the fire without a word.

Mary Brent sat tapping her foot on the floor.

"'T is strange he should have left without a word," she said at last.

"Never fear, Mary! We have not lost him. He is too large to be mislaid like a parcel. He did but go out to fulfil a behest of mine, and if Father White understands him, as he says he does, he will have divined that it was an errand of courtesy and good-will on which he set out."

A silence fell on the group. Then Father White, looking out, exclaimed: "'T is a bitter night and the snow is falling again! No wonder the settlers grumble over such a winter in this land where they were promised all sunshine and flowers."

"Yes," said Mary Brent. "If the weather is to be like this, we might as well have settled on the bleak Massachusetts coast."

"It cannot last long. The natives all say they never knew such a season. They fear to go abroad at night, there are so many half-starved wild beasts prowling around."

Elinor rose and began to pace the floor uneasily.

"But," continued Father White, "there are more reasons than those of climate for preferring Maryland to Massachusetts. How wouldst thou have prospered in a Puritan colony?"

"I trust even there I should have been true to Mother Church, and perchance converted some of the heretics from the error of their ways."

"Yet," interrupted Elinor, "they too are serving God in their own way."

Mary Brent shook her head. "I care not to talk of them. In truth had I known this Neville was a Protestant, I had never urged him for thy tenant at Robin Hood's Barn."

Elinor murmured something about "toleration."

"Toleration!" repeated her cousin scornfully. "I hate the word. He that tolerates any religion against his own is either a hypocrite or a backslider."

"Shall there be no liberty of conscience?"

"Ay, but liberty to think wrong is no liberty."

"These be deep matters, my daughters, and best left to the schoolmen," said Father White. "None doubt that Mistress Brent hath kept her fidelity unspotted to the Church. Let Elinor Calvert pattern after her kinswoman."

Thereafter Father White turned again to the subject of missions, and the two women listened till the hour-glass had been turned and the candles began to burn low in their sockets. At last Mary Brent grew somewhat impatient. If she had a vice it was excess of punctuality. She was willing to share her last crust with a stran-

ger; but he must be on hand when it came out of the oven. The hours for meals and especially for bedtime were scrupulously observed in her household, and to-night it irked her to be kept up thus beyond her usual hour for retiring.

Elinor, perceiving this and feeling some sense of responsibility for the cause, said at last, —

"I pray thee, Cousin, wait no longer the coming of Sir Christopher, whose errand has kept him beyond what I counted on, else I would not have given my consent. Father White and I will sit up to await his coming. Go thou to bed, and see that the counterpane is drawn high over Cecil, for the howling of the wind promises a cold night."

"Poor little one!" said Mary Brent, rising and evidently glad of an excuse for retiring, "I will see that he is tucked in warm and snug. Sir Christopher is to sleep next Father White. I have had his bed made with our new homespun sheets."

As Mistress Brent passed out of sight up the stairs, Elinor turned to Father White with tears standing in her eyes, —

"How good she is!" she murmured.

"Ay, a good woman — her price is above rubies. I pray that by her example and influence you may be held as true as she to your duties to God and His Holy Church."

Elinor stirred uneasily. The movement did not escape the priest's eye, accustomed to studying every symptom of the soul's troubles as a physician studies the signs of bodily tribulations.

"My daughter," he continued, "is your heart wholly at peace — firmly stayed upon the living rock?"

"No! no!" cried Elinor, "it is rather a boat tossed upon the waves at the mercy of every tempest that sweeps the waters."

"How strange!" said Father White, speaking softly as to a suffering child. "How strange that you thus of your own will are tossed about, and run the risk of being cast upon the rocks; yea, of perishing utterly in the whirlwind, when peace is waiting for you, to be had for the asking."

"I would I knew how to find it."

"Even as St. Peter found it when he too was in peril of deep waters, by calling upon the name of the Lord. Come, my daughter, come with me to the altar, that we may seek it together!"

Taking a candle from the table he rose and led the way to the recess at the end of the hall, which Mary Brent had piously fitted up as a chapel, where before the altar burned the undying lamp of devotion.

"Here," said the priest, "peace awaits the storm-tossed soul. It shall be thine. But first must thou throw overboard all sinful desires, all

guilty memories, all selfish wishes, and seek in simplicity of heart that peace of God which passeth understanding. Kneel, my daughter, at the confessional!"

So saying he seated himself in the great oaken chair, brought out of England. Elinor fell upon her knees beside it and poured out the grief and struggles of her tumultuous soul.

"Bless me, Father, because I have sinned." The voice trembled at first so that the words could scarcely be heard, but grew firmer as she went on in the familiar words: "I confess to Almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault."

"*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*" How the words ring down the ages laden with their burden of human penitence and remorse! Still, despite all the uses to which they have been wrested by hypocrisy and levity, they remain infinitely touching in the link they furnish, the bond of unity for the suffering, sin-laden souls of many races and many generations.

When Elinor had finished the list of offences whereof she wished to free her soul, and which

even to the sensitive conscience of Father White appeared over trivial for the emotion she had shown, the priest asked softly: "Is there nothing else? Examine well thine heart. Leave no dark sin untold to grow in the shadow and choke the fair flower of repentance."

"No, Father, I know of no other sin."

"Nor any unworthy wish?"

"Nor any unworthy wish."

"Nor any carnal affection threatening to draw thy soul away from the path of salvation?"

The shaft was shrewdly aimed. It struck home.

"Father, is it a sin to love?"

"It may be — a deadly sin."

"To love purely, with a high and unselfish devotion?"

"It may be."

"Prithee, tell me how, since God himself is love."

"There is indeed a Godlike love, stooping to the weakest, bending over the lowest, yearning most over the most unworthy, such as the love of the shepherd for his sheep, of the mother for her son, of the true priest for his flock; but let a woman beware how she brings to the altar such a love for her husband."

Elinor started.

"Yes," Father White went on tenderly, but as

one who must probe the wound that it may heal the sooner, "it is the nature of woman to look up. She will do it, and if she cannot raise the one she loves she will stoop to the dust herself, that from that abasement the man may still seem to stand above her."

"Father," cried Elinor, casting aside all concealment, "the man I love is not base."

"Do I know him?"

"You have seen him."

"This night?"

"This night."

"Can a man who knoweth not how to rule his own tongue rule a wife, and above all a wife like thee, aflame one instant, the next melted to tenderness, full of pity and long-suffering, yet quick of spirit and proud as Lucifer?"

Elinor was silent.

"A captious temper is a grievous fault, yet it may be mended — if he is of the true faith. But, oh, my daughter, tempt not thy fate by marrying an unbeliever! Faults thou mayst conquer; sins thou mayst forgive or win forgiveness for; but unbelief is a blight which fosters every vice and destroys every virtue. Root up this passion, though it seem to tear thy life with it. Think on thy boy! Durst thou expose him to the influence of such an example?"

"Father," said Elinor, tremulously, "I cannot

answer now — I must have time to think. Who knows but my love may draw him into the right path? "

The priest shook his head; but as he was about to answer, the stamping of feet was heard outside, and Father White dismissed his penitent with a wave of his hand.

"Go, my daughter. But as thou dost value thy soul and the soul of thy boy, entangle thyself no further till thou hast taken counsel once more with me. And may Almighty God be merciful unto thee, and, forgiving thee thy sins, bring thee to life everlasting!"

Elinor rose from her knees, and drawing aside the curtain passed out into the hall, while Father White tarried for the candles.

Neville came in at the outer door, bringing with him a gust of wind and cold. Knut rose from the hearth with a low growl and moved suspiciously toward the stranger, then, drawn by some magnetic attraction, he nosed about him and at last fawned upon him and rubbed against his legs, seeking a caress. Neville bent over and patted his head. "Good dog!" he said, "I would I had had you with me in the forest yonder. Belike I had not been so long in finding my way out. Ah, Mistress Calvert," he added, peering into the shadow from which gleamed the shimmer of Elinor's gown, "I am grieved to have kept the

household awake so late, and all for naught, since I failed as completely in the search for Father Mohl as though he had vanished like a spirit in the air."

"Yet of old you were a swift runner. I have seen you chase a hare across the fields at Frome and keep the pace."

"Ay, but that was over Somerset turf, and with the light of day to guide me."

"I am much disappointed —"

Neville felt the chill in Elinor's tone.

"Not more disappointed than I," he answered. "'T is the elements must bear the blame. When I started out the moonlight shone full on the path, and I could see my way for a quarter of a mile, but even then the clouds were hanging round the moon like wolves about a sheep-fold. In half an hour she was swallowed up, and then, to confuse me the more, a light snow began falling, slowly at first, then faster and faster, till, what with the wind in my face and the snow on the path, I lost the trail somewhere near the cross-road. Before I knew it I was caught in a thicket of brush and briar, and when I had struggled out there was no hope of catching the priest."

Elinor looked closely at Neville. He was very white and breathing heavily.

"You are hurt," she exclaimed, moving toward him with quick sympathy. "See, your garments

are pulled this way and that as if you had struggled with worse foes than the wind."

"Only contact with a few brambles through which I forced my way back to the road I had lost."

"But your jerkin is torn —"

"Ay, caught on a stray branch which hung too low."

"And there is blood on your boots — yes, and on your hands. Oh, tell me what you have gone through while we sat here at our ease by the hearth!"

Neville drew near and spoke low: "For such sympathy I would have dared far more than I met. If you will have the story, it fell out thus. Having forgot to buckle on my sword as I went out, I found myself scantily armed with my short poniard. Yet did I never think of danger, till after I had turned about, and losing the blazed path, began to scan each branch I passed, for some token that might lead me straight.

"Peering about me with my poniard in hand to cut the boughs, I was aware of a rustling in the branches over my head as of something heavier than bird or fowl. I jumped aside. The creature sprang and missed me. My hope lay in a counter attack, and I in turn leaped upon her, and buried my poniard in her neck. She must have been made of something other than flesh

and blood, else she had fallen dead at my feet from that blow; but instead she made off at a bound, and with such speed that I had no chance to discover her species, though in the dark she looked about the size of a panther. The worst thing in the whole adventure was the loss of my knife. It has helped me through many a perilous place, and it goes hard with me to have lost it now. I suppose I may count this the best service it has done me. But why do I dwell at such length upon a trifle? I warrant there be few hunters who have passed a night in our wilderness without some such taste of the manners of wild beasts."

"Make not light of such an escape," murmured Elinor, breathlessly. "As for me, I will give thanks for thee upon my knees in my closet. Father White will show thee to thy chamber. 'T is the one next his, and hath the distinction of owning a bed with sheets in place of a deerskin."

Neville gazed at Elinor with some disappointment. He did not appreciate that this was the way her quick wit chose to let him know that their conversation was overheard. As he looked up at her words, he saw Father White moving towards them. The candle in his hand shone upward and cast a light on his white hairs, which gave them the effect of a halo around his forehead. As he held up his fingers in token of

benediction to Elinor as she passed him, he seemed like some saint breathing serenity and heavenly joy.

Despite his lifetime prejudices Neville felt himself vaguely stirred by the half-unearthly vision of the saintly face framed in its snowy halo, and the dark robes fading into the blackness of the hall beyond.

"Bless me too, Father!" he murmured, "for I have sinned." The priest moved as if he were about to comply, then suddenly recalling himself, he dropped his half outstretched arm and asked:

"Is it the blessing of Holy Church you crave?"

"No, faith!" cried Neville, suddenly emancipated from the thrall of his first impression. "It was but the blessing of a good man I asked, which to my thinking should have some value, with the backing of any church or none; but since it must be bought with hypocrisy or begged on bended knee I will have none of it. Good-night, madam," he added, bowing low to Elinor; and helping himself to a candle from the table, he lighted it at the fire.

"Good-night, my daughter!" the priest echoed, and added softly: "*Concede misericors Deus fragilitati nostræ præsidium!*"

CHAPTER IV

THE LORD OF THE MANOR

THE morning sun streamed into the bedroom where Cecil slept on his low truckle-bed beside his mother's curtained couch. The brilliant rays tugged at the boy's eyelids and lifted them as suddenly as the ropes raise the curtain of a play-house, and indeed to this small observer it seemed that a perpetual comedy was being acted in the world for his special benefit. Better still, that it was his delightful privilege to play the part of Harlequin in this rare farce of life and to make the gravest grown-people the sport of his jests. The earliest manifestation of humor, in the individual as in the race, is the practical joke; so it was quite natural that as a fresh and delightful pleasantry it occurred to Cecil, instantly on waking, to creep over to his mother's bed and begin to tickle her ear with the tassel of the bed curtain. The mere occupation was pleasure enough, but the sensation rose to ecstasy as he watched the sleepy hand raised time after time to brush away the supposed

insect. At length the enjoyment grew too exquisite for repression, and at the cost of ruining its own existence burst out into a peal of laughter that roused the drowsy mother.

"Thou naughty implet! What hour o' the clock is it?"

"I know not the hour o' the clock; but o' the sun 't is past rising time, and Couthin Mary is stirring already."

"Then we must be stirring too; but first sit thee down here on the edge of the bed and try to listen as if thou wert grown."

"I am, mother, — I am above thy waist."

"Ay," said Elinor, smiling, "but the question is, art thou up to my meaning? Hearken! Dost thou know what a tenant is?"

"Ay, — 't is a man who farms thy land, giving thee half and keeping three quarters for himthelf."

His mother laughed.

"Thou hast a good understanding for one so young, and the description is apt enough for most tenants; but how say you of one who would give thee three quarters and keep only one for himself?"

"Why, 't would not become a Calvert to drive such a bargain with such a poor fool."

"Thou art not far wrong. Share and share alike is fair dealing 'twixt land and labor, and

so let it be between thee and Sir Christopher Neville."

"Thir Chrithtopher Neville! The gentleman that came last night? Why, he ith no laborer. He cannot be in need to work for a living."

"Nay, Cecil, 't is a labor of love."

"There, mother, I knew he liked me, for all thou saidst my borrowing of his sword and cloak did anger him. Every one likes me. Couthin Mary says so."

"Vain popinjay! thou art too credulous of compliments."

"Would Couthin Mary tell a lie?"

"Never mind that question now, but don thy best clothing for the ceremony of receiving the homage of thy tenant this morning."

"Hooray! Am I to wear my morocco shoes with the red satin roses?"

"Ay."

"And my thilver-broidered doublet?"

"Ay, little peacock."

"And my stockings with the clocks of gold? Oh, Mother, it makes me feel so grand! I like being lord of the manor. And Thir Chrithtopher Neville must kneel before me; and how if I tickle him on the neck when he bends, and make him laugh out before them all?"

"Cecil, if thou dost disgrace me by any of thy clownish pranks, thou and I will never be friends

more. And give thyself no airs either with this kind new friend. Say to thyself, when he bows before thee, that it is strength bending to weakness, and pride stooping that it may help the helpless."

"Do I stand on the platform at the end of the hall where Couthin Mary stands when her tenants come in?"

"Yes, with Cousin Mary and me beside thee."

"I hope Thir Chrithtopher trips on the step. But I like him, for all he hath the eyes of a hawk and the mouth of a mastiff."

"Well thou mayst like him! Friends like him are scarce enough anywhere, and most of all in this new land. Now run away and make haste lest we vex Cousin Mary by our tardiness, and so begin awry the day which should open with all good omens. But, Cecil, I have a gift for thee, something I gave thy father on our marriage. I did think to keep it till thou shouldst be of age; but on the whole I would rather thou hadst it to remember this day by."

So speaking, Elinor unlocked her jewel-chest of black oak bound with brass, and drew from within a pomander-box of gold, the under lid pierced with holes which permitted the fragrance to escape till it nearly filled the room with the mingled odor of rose attar and storax, civet and ambergris, the upper lid adorned with a miniature

of Elinor Calvert painted on ivory and set in pearls like the picture of Cecil which she wore at her breast. The artist had worked as one who loves his task, and the delicate tints of neck and arms shone half-veiled by the creamy lace that fell over them. In the golden curls a red rose nestled, and around the throat glistened a necklace of rubies.

"Mother!" exclaimed Cecil, "wert thou once as beautiful as that?"

Elinor smiled; but it was not quite a happy smile.

"Yes, once I was as fair as that, and in those days there were many to care whether I was fair or not. Now there be few either to know or care."

"Nay, to me thou art still fair, Mother, and there is another who thinks so too."

"Who is that?"

"Thir Chrithtopher. I saw him looking at you last night, and, Mother, don't you think, since he thinks to deal so generously with us, it would be a fine thing for me to give him this portrait of thee to bind the bargain?"

"Foolish baby, 't will be time enough to think of that when he asks for it."

"Then if he asks for it, I may give it—"

"A safe promise truly," said Elinor, smiling this time with beaming eyes and cheeks, whose

rose flush matched the coloring of the ivory portrait. "Now hasten with thy dressing."

Cecil's head was so filled with thoughts of the pomander-box and his own greatness that his mother was fully dressed while he sat mooning over the lacing of his hose and breeches, and gazing with admiring fondness at the red roses on his holiday shoes.

Three times Cousin Mary had called to him to make haste, and when at last he entered the hall every one had finished eating, and he was sent in disgrace to take his breakfast in the buttery. This was too great a blow for his new-swollen pride, and he fell to howling lustily, while the tears flowed into his cup of milk and salted it with their brine. The day which an hour ago had been one glow of rose color all arranged as a background for the figure of Cecil Calvert in his velvet suit and gold-clocked stockings, had become a plain Thursday morning in which a little boy was crying into his milk in a bare buttery hung with pails and pans.

Suddenly he felt a strong arm thrown over his shoulder, and a kind voice said in his ear: "I have been late more than once, Cecil; but it will not do for pioneers, least of all for Little John or Robin Hood."

"Go away; I hate thee," answered the amiable child.

"Dost thou truly? and why?"

"Because were it not for thee I had not put on my best suit with the troublesome lacings, and but for that I had not been late, and but for that Couthin Mary had not been vexed, and but for that Mother had not punished me."

"I see clearly it is I am to blame; and now if thou hast finished thy bread and milk let us go and ask pardon for our — I mean *my* fault, and perhaps we shall be forgiven."

Hand in hand the Lord of the Manor and his tenant sought the hall.

As they walked along the corridor, Neville's face wore a characteristic smile. This smile of his seemed to begin in one corner of his mouth and ripple along without ever quite reaching the other, which, to tell the truth, would have required a goodly journey. There was a certain fascination in the smile; but one who would fathom its meaning must look for it, not in the lips at all, but in the pucker of the eyelids and the gray twinkle of the eyes and the chuckle that lay hid somewhere in the little creases that the years had drawn in diverging lines from the point where the lids met.

If Neville was amused he felt no need of proclaiming the fact. A sense of the ridiculous marks the noisy man, wit the talkative man; but humor and silence have a strange affinity, and a smile needs no interpreter to itself.

"Pray, Mistress Brent," said Neville, bowing before his hostess when they reached the hall, "wilt thou forgive me for being the cause that Master Cecil did put on his best suit with the troublesome lacings, whereby he was late to breakfast?"

Mary Brent, being a literal soul, replied, "Why, 't was not thy fault at all."

"Then," said Neville, "let the offence become a fixed charge upon the estate, which I as tenant must assume, and whereupon I promise to give a breakfast party at Robin Hood's Barn to those here present on this date each year in remembrance of this day's delinquency.

"As for thee, Sir Landlord, I will give thee an Indian bow and arrows, that thou mayst play Little John, and when thou dost come a-hunting at Robin Hood's Barn, thou mayst work havoc at thy will among the heron and wild duck which I am told do specially abound on the shores of the bay."

"How say you, Mistress Brent, are the terms accepted, and are we ready for the ceremony of investiture?"

"I have already bidden in the household," said Mary Brent, and following on her words there came filing in a train of men and maid servants, white and black, all arrayed in holiday attire, till the lower part of the long room was filled.

"'T is a stately ceremonial thou hast planned," said Elinor, smiling at her cousin.

"Well enough!" Mary Brent answered, veiling her satisfaction in deprecation, "since thou hast as yet no tenants, and canst not hold a court baron at Robin Hood's Barn. I would Giles and Leonard Calvert were here, for in truth 't is as goodly a show as we have held."

The tenantry were gathered.

On the dais stood Cecil, his eyes dancing under the page-cut hair which fell like thatch over his forehead, and his curls tremulous with the excitement, which would not let him be still for an instant. Elinor stood beside him in a white dress with a golden girdle, and on the step knelt Neville.

Elinor found leisure to note the elegance of the jewelled buckles which he wore on his shoes, and that his collar was of Venice point. It pleased her that he had taken as much trouble to array himself for his investiture as he would have done for a court function.

Of what was Neville thinking as he knelt there on the step of the dais?

Was it of Cecil and his manor?

Not at all.

Of law and leases?

Still less.

Of what, then?

Why, of the tiny point of a lady's slipper under a white robe, a slipper that tempted him to bend a little lower still and kiss it. Would she feel it, he wondered? Would she chide him if she did? Men kissed the foot of a saint without blame. If the adorable is to be adored and the lovable to be loved, why was not the kissable to be kissed? Besides, — only a slipper!

He was in the hem-of-the-garment stage of his passion, and fancied himself humble in his desire.

"Stretch out thy rod, Cecil!" It was Elinor's voice that broke in on Neville's indecision.

The boy reached forth the stick of ebony tipped with silver which was Baltimore's gift to Mary Brent on her coming out of England. Neville grasped the other end, and smiling at Cecil, with a single upward glance at Elinor bending over him, he said, —

"Hear you, my lord, that I, Christopher Neville, shall be to you both true and faithful, and shall owe my fidelity to you for the land I hold of you, and lawfully shall do and perform such customs and services as my duty is to you, so help me God and all His saints."

"Amen!" said Father White.

"By the terms assigned I do promise to pay to you on taking possession of the manor at Cecil Point ten Indian arrows and a string of fish, and

M. Burney

thereafter, when the land shall be cleared, to yield you three quarters of the harvest yearly."

"Nay," interrupted Cecil, "'t is not the bond mother and I did agree upon; 't was to be share and share alike. Saidst thou not so in bed this morning, Mother?"

Before Elinor could reply, Father White spoke as he stepped forward, —

"The case may be happily settled, my daughter, by the yielding of the quarter in dispute to the revenue at St. Inigo's for the benefit of Holy Church."

The mutinous blood rose in Neville's cheeks and his chin went out quarter of an inch; but he held his peace and looked toward Elinor, who also colored but spoke firmly, —

"Nay, Father, 't were not well that the Church should profit by an injustice. What duty Cecil hath to the Church is for thee and me to settle later, but it must come from his share and not from Sir Christopher's. Now, Cecil, 't is thy turn to make thy promise to thy tenant. Go on: 'I, Cecilius Calvert — '"

"Now, Mother," said the young landlord, shaking off the admonishing hand from his shoulder with a petulance for which a young Puritan would have been roundly punished, "if thou dost prompt me like that none will believe I know my part, and I have learned it as well as thou, thus:

I, Cecilius Calvert, do hereby accept thee, Chrithtopher Neville, as my tenant at Cecil Point, and promise to protect thee in thy rights to the extent of the law, and if need be by the aid of my sword."

Neville smiled in spite of himself at the words, and a ripple of laughter went round the circle of tenants as they noted the comparative size of protector and protected; but Cecil was too full of his new-fledged dignity to heed them. He called for the written deed and the candle and the wax, and on the oaken table he scrawled his name under those of his mother and Sir Christopher, and then taking off his signet ring — 't was his father's and a deal too wide for his chubby finger, — he pressed it firmly into the wax covering the seam of the folded paper, and then stood looking with admiration at the print of the crest; a ducal crown surmounted by two half-bannerets. "'T is a pretty device, is it not, Thir Chrithtopher? I would you had as pretty a one. Mother, if Thir Chrithtopher Neville married thee would he bear the Calvert crest?"

If one could slay one's child and bring him to life again after an appropriate interval many of us might be tempted to infanticide. A great flame of anger and shame rose to Elinor's cheek; but Neville came to her assistance.

"Nay, little landlord," he said coolly, "no

husband of thy mother could bear thy crest. 'T is for thee, as the only heir in this generation, to bear it worthily before the world. Mistress Brent, is the ceremony ended?"

"Ay, and most happily," said Mary, nervously, struggling between desire to laugh and cry; "let us have in the cake and wine."

The servants went out to fetch the great trays of oaken wood with rim and handles of silver which had been in the Brent family for generations. As they re-entered in procession, — for Mary Brent dearly loved form and ceremony, and kept it up even here in the wilderness, — a knock was heard at the iron-studded door.

Being flung open it revealed the figure of a man, a tall, slender man with Saxon flaxen hair and true blue eyes.

"Mistress Brent?" he said questioningly, looking from Mary to Elinor.

"I am she," said Mary, stepping forward and holding out her hand with even more than her usual warmth of hospitality. "Can I be of service to you?"

"The question is, rather, are you willing to allow my claim upon your far-famed hospitality?"

"I think it has never yet been denied any one."

"I believe it well, but perhaps no one ever yet claimed it who lay under such a shadow. If you consent in your goodness to shelter a

traveller, you must know that you are harboring the brother of Richard Ingle."

Mary Brent started, for her brother had confided to her Richard Ingle's treasonable speeches, and in her eyes treason ranked next to blasphemy among the unpardonable sins. For an instant she hesitated and half withdrew her hand, then stretching it out again she looked full at him and said, —

"'T were a pity frank truth-telling like yours should cost you dear. Let me ask but one question, Do you hold with your brother in his treason?"

A pained look came into Ralph Ingle's eyes. "Lady," he said, "'t is a hard matter to hear or speak evil of one's brother — one's only brother." His lip trembled, but the voice rang clear and steady. "Yet when the time comes to choose between brotherly affection and one's duty to King and Commonwealth, the knot must be cut though the blood flows. So I told Richard yesterday, there on the deck of *The Reformation*, and hereafter we have sworn to forget that the same father called us both son."

"You speak like a true man," said Mary Brent, "and shall be taken at your word. You find us celebrating the tenancy of Sir Christopher Neville yonder, who is taking up land of Mistress Calvert and her son.

"Elinor, this is Master Ingle. Judge him on his deeds — not his name!"

Ingle swept the ground with the plumes of his hat before Elinor as he murmured, —

"Nay, rather judge me of your own gentleness, and let mercy temper the verdict."

Neville stood looking coldly at the intruder. He was jealous, for he saw the light of a new interest dawning in Elinor Calvert's face, and he saw the hot, passionate light of love at first sight as clear as day in Ralph Ingle's eyes.

For the first time he was conscious with angry protest that he was growing old. His cast-down glance fell upon his grizzled mustachios, and he inwardly cursed the sign of age. "The conceited stripling!" he muttered, as he looked at the bowing golden curls. "I know I am not just. I have no ambition to be just. I hate him. Come, Cecil," he said, crossing over to where the child stood holding a wine cup in one hand and a distressingly large slice of fruit cake in the other, "thou and I have no larger part to play here than the cock in Hamlet."

"What part did he play?" asked Cecil, crowding his mouth with plums, while he held the remaining cake high above his head to escape Knut's jumping.

"Oh, the important office was his to announce the daybreak and put an end to the ghost's walk-

ing. Do ghosts walk nowadays dost thou think, Cecil?"

"Sure."

"I think so too; I have seen them, — in fact, I feel sometimes as if I were one of them."

"Art thou really?" Cecil's eyes were round as saucers.

"Well, never mind that question just now. Perhaps I am — perhaps I am not; do thou drain thy wine, and let us be off outside to build a snow-man in the road."

Nothing loath, the child slipped his hand into the big, muscular one held out to him, and unobserved by the preoccupied group around the fire, they slipped out.

Ralph Ingle turned as they passed him. "I must watch that man," he thought. "He who takes a child by the hand takes the mother by the heart."

"Wait," said Cecil at the door. "I must doff my finery, for who knows when I may need it to receive another tenant?"

"Prudent lad! I will do the same, lest I catch the fever and then thou must needs seek a new tenant. But, Cecil, promise me one thing."

"Ay, a dozen if you wish."

"Promise me that, whatever tenants thou mayst have hereafter, thou wilt like me best."

"Why, so I will, especially if you give me

the bow and arrows you promised. I liked you right away last night, and mother likes you, and Cousin Mary likes you, and Father White likes you a little; but I 'll tell you who doth not."

"Let us hear, then; who is he that has such poor taste in likings?"

"Father Mohl."

"Why do you think that?"

"He thmiled at you."

"Oh! Is that a bad sign with the reverend Mohl."

"You mutht not call him that — you mutht call him holy Father. But you are right, it is a bad sign when he smiles that way. It is how he looks when he complains to Mother of me, and gets me a whipping. Father White smiles like a kind old pussy-cat; but Father Mohl smiles like a wolf."

"But thou wilt stand my friend even if Father Mohl like me not?"

"Pooh, that makes no difference!"

"And thou wilt help thy mother to go on liking me?"

"Yes. She does everything I ask her to, and I 'll tell her you are going to be my best friend."

"I thank thee."

"Well, you are, you know. Of course you are rather old and somewhat plain, and I cannot promise not to think Master Ingle within there

is handsomer, but I shall always like you best, and beauty doth not count when you know a person."

"No, but 't is an amazing good letter of introduction. Now fly up and change to thine old suit and we will build a snow-man as high as the window and we will put curls on him as long as those on that jackanapes inside — I mean as those of the beautiful young man who calls himself Ralph Ingle."

When Cecil had changed to his every-day clothes he came down again looking more comfortable in mind and body. "I think," he confided to Neville, "that I could eat another piece of cake. The belt of this doublet is so much looser than in my best."

"Ay, but there is dinner to come, and 't is best to make allowance for this future; besides, who is this at the wharf in the in-bound boat?"

"Why, 't is Couthin Margaret."

"So it is. For a moment I thought her a man in that long cloak and those heavy boots. Let us go down to meet her!"

When they reached the dock, the man in the ketch was already clewing up the sails, while the woman on the wharf stood giving orders. At the sound of approaching footsteps she turned.

Despite her rough attire and forty-odd years, Margaret Brent was a woman worth looking at.

Her personality was marked by a noble largeness which obliterated detail, and cast a mantle of oblivion over defects. The first impression made upon all who came in contact with her was of her adequacy to the situation before her, whether it was a rout or a riot. This it was which a few years later won her the thanks of the Maryland Assembly for her prompt action in a political crisis, which led her kinsman to leave her sole executrix of his great estate with the brief instruction, "Take all — pay all!" and which, finally, before her death made her the most famous woman in the colony.

Through all the vicissitudes of pioneer life she kept the air and bearing of race. Even now, though a wave of gray wind-blown hair had escaped from her hood, and her falling band was pulled awry, yet no princess in full regalia could have been more the great lady than she as she came forward to meet Cecil and his companion.

"Sir Christopher, I greet you. I would I had known of your coming yesterday that I might have had your company and protection."

Neville bowed, smiling. "The advantage of both would have been on my side, for Mistress Brent's prowess is a byword."

"Say they so indeed!" Margaret answered without attempt at disclaimer and with a smile which showed her strong white teeth, "I am

glad of that, for I may need the repute in the near future. Sorry was I to hear that you had thoughts of taking up land in this part of the country and deserting Kent Fort. I count you the strongest man we have among us, and since Claiborne's rebellious efforts we need all the help we can claim. 'T is in regard to this that I have followed my brother hither."

"I am sorry; but I fear you must meet disappointment. He has been called to St. Mary's by troubles over Dick Ingle. He may return to-morrow."

"Nay, if he comes not back to-day I must turn out the trainband on my own responsibility. The matter will not keep."

"You should be made a captain."

"Not I! I am too wise for that. The captain must give place to the colonel, and the colonel to the general; but the woman is above them all, and what men would never yield of their obstinacy to equality, they will oft give up of their courtesy to her weakness. Besides, men never forget the obedience to women they learn at their mother's knee — or over it —

"Is it not so, Father?" she went on, turning to Father White, who had joined them. "Have I not heard thee say any one might have the training of a child after seven if thou couldst have the teaching of him till then?"

"Ay, 't is so — though this boy may not do so much credit to my teaching as I could wish;" and he pinched Cecil's ear, laughing.

"He is too busy keeping his body a-growing, I fancy, to pay much heed to his soul. How say you, Cecil, — wilt thou lend me those cheeks of thine for cushions?"

"No," answered the child, gravely, "elthe how could I keep my food in when I eat? Let me go! I mutht tell Couthin Mary thou art come. I dearly love to be the firtht to tell newth."

But this time he was too late, for Mary had caught sight of the group, and came running down the path.

"Oh, Margaret, but I am glad to see thee! Bless thine heart, how thou art blown! I have great need of thy counsel. I must have thee tell me if the pickles want sweetening, and if the stockade be high enough, and how many cattle I should order out of England —"

"Why hast not asked Giles all these things?"

"Why, Giles is so great a man he will give no heed to small things, but puts them off with a 'Presently — presently —'"

"Ay, and if he have not a care, this 'Presently, presently' will cost him dear. In a new land least of all can we afford to despise the day of small things. — Ah! there is my Cousin Elinor!"

She broke off, seeing Mistress Calvert in the doorway.

The two women did not altogether harmonize. They were too much alike, and neither cared for her own type. Both loved to dominate men, though neither would have owned it. Elinor had early chosen the heart as her sphere of influence, and Margaret Brent the mind. It was in the border land that they clashed. Yet, had either been asked, especially when separated, who was the noblest woman she knew, one would have said "Elinor Calvert," the other, "Margaret Brent."

"Come in," said Elinor, as she kissed her cousin's cheek. "Come in and share the feast set out in honor of Sir Christopher Neville, Cecil's new tenant, at Robin Hood's Barn."

"I knew thou wouldst have him."

"Verily? then thou didst know more than I."

"No doubt — 't is the privilege of the looker-on. Besides, I knew thy business head, which is better than one would think to watch thine impulsive bearing, and none but a fool would let such a tenant as Christopher Neville slip through her fingers."

Elinor reddened.

"Nay, now I see I have said somewhat amiss, but the time is too short to find out what, so forgive my sins in the bulk, and believe that I

do love thee much for all we fit not always in our moods. Mary, if thou hast something hot for the inner man, prithee let me have it, for I am well-nigh starved and frozen."

To herself she said, "Neville is in love with Elinor Calvert — foolish man! She means to use him — wise woman!"

Which proves that a clever observer may be too clever, and see both more and less than there is to be seen.

Neville, after watching the women enter the house with Cecil hanging to his mother's gown, strode down the path with head thrown back, and the glint of a firm purpose shining from between his narrowed lids.

CHAPTER V

PEGGY

GILES BRENT was not in an enviable frame of mind on this January morning, after his visit to St. Gabriel's manor. The gold lace on his coat, marking his rank as deputy-governor of Maryland, covered an anxious heart, and as he walked along the path over the bluff in the village of St. Mary's he twirled the gold-tipped lacings of his doublet, and cursed his fate in being caught in this coil of colonial politics, and wished his cousin Leonard Calvert would come home from England and attend to his own business.

Why, all of a sudden, was his brow cleared of its furrows, and his mind of its worries for the moment? Because he had caught sight at a window of a girl's face, — a faulty, charming face with velvet brown eyes, and hair that shook a dusky glamour over them, — the face of Peggy Neville.

This Peggy was a born coquette — not of the type that sets its cap at a man as obviously as a

boy casts the net for butterflies, but a coquette by instinct, full of contradictory impulses, with eyes that whispered "Come!" even while blush and frown cried "Halt!" — with the gaiety of a flight of larks, alternating with pouts and tears as sudden and violent as a summer thunder-shower. Such a girl has often a peculiar charm for an older man, who looks on amused at her coquetries, and finds her friendship as firm as her loves are fickle. Between Governor Brent and Peggy Neville such a friendship was established, and it was with a delight dimpling into smiles that she threw wide the window, and leaning out into the frosty air, cried out joyously, —

"Good-morning, your Excellency! Do you bring any news of that good-for-nothing brother of mine?"

The governor shook his sword at her.

"I will have you in the sheriff's hands if you speak so lightly of my close friend," he answered. "Is your aunt at home?"

"No, but my aunt's niece is, and much exercised to hear the news from Kent Fort. So prithee come in and rest awhile."

Brent entered at a door so low that he was compelled to bow his tall head.

"The news of most interest to you," he said, seating himself by the fire, "comes not from Kent Fort, but from St. Gabriel's Manor, which

I left just before the expected arrival of that aforesaid good-for-nothing brother of yours, who is in treaty with me for the manor at Cecil Point, which Baltimore christened Robin Hood's Barn when he made a grant of it to Mistress Elinor Calvert. The lady is staying with my sister Mary at present."

"You have just come from St. Gabriel's?" queried Peggy, "and just seen Mistress Calvert? Then pray tell me all about her. She is very, *very* handsome, they say —"

"Then for once they say truth. I have seen her enter the gallery at The Globe when all the gallants on the stage rose to catch sight of her, and I have seen the London street-sweepers follow her for a mile. There 's beauty for you!"

"And she is very wise too?"

"Ay, as good a head for affairs as mine, and I think no small things of mine own abilities."

"And she is virtuous and tender and true?"

"The tenderest of mothers, and the loyalest of kinswomen."

Peggy cast down her long-fringed eyes and studied the pointed toes of her red slippers. At length looking up timidly she asked, —

"Think you I could ever be like her?"

Giles Brent burst out into a great laugh.

"Oh — not in beauty!" Peggy rushed on, all in confusion — "not in beauty, of course, nor in

mind, but could I make my character like hers? You see, Christopher has always told me how perfect she was, and said how proud he should be to see me like her."

"Christopher!" exclaimed Brent.

"Oho!" he thought to himself, "so the wind blows from that quarter, does it? That explains many things. But why under heaven did he conceal the whole business from me?"

Aloud he said: "Never mind what Christopher tells you, pretty Peggy! Take my advice and do not waste your time in trying to be like this one or that, — not even my Cousin Elinor. You have gifts and graces all your own. Make the most of them, and let the others go. Who is that outside the door? I thought I knew every man in St. Mary's, at least by sight."

"That?" said Peggy, looking out at the window with a fine show of indifference, and then moving hastily nearer the fire, "that is no citizen of St. Mary's, but a young Virginian in command of the ketch *Lady Betty* from the York River."

"And his name?"

"Romney Huntoon."

"Huntoon — ? I wonder who his father is. Know you anything of his family?"

"No, save that his father was a physician once and won great reputation somehow, and his mother was a daughter of Sir William Romney,

and heiress to a fortune, wherewith they bought wide tracts of land on the York River, and live, 'tis said, in more state than any in Virginia save Governor Berkeley himself."

"Ah, now I place him. He was head of Flower da Hundred at the time of the massacre, and since has risen to be a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. I would like to speak with this young man. Is that his knock at the door?"

"I — I think it may be," hesitated Peggy. "He brought a letter from his mother to my aunt, who knew her in their youth at home in Devonshire."

Hard upon her remarks a young man entered the room, and stood hesitating in the doorway as if loath to venture further without assurance of welcome.

He was a colty youth, with long legs and slim body, and hands and feet that had not learned the repose of maturity. He had also a shock of dark curls, and under arching brows a pair of merry blue eyes that danced when anything pleased him beyond the common, like the sun on Easter morning, while under their surface mirth lay steadfast depths which bade fair to endure when their dancing days were over.

Just now there was more of anxiety than mirth in them as they turned toward the slip of a girl

by the hearth, as timid a glance as if she were the Shah of Persia and he a humble subject in terror of the bowstring.

"Come in!" vouchsafed Peggy, — but with some impatience in her voice, for she had not yet begun on the list of questions she had prepared for her other visitor.

"Governor Brent, this is Master Romney Huntoon. Master Huntoon, I have the honor to present you to Governor Brent." Both men bowed, the younger man lower.

"I fancy," said Brent, "that I am not wrong in taking you for the son of that Humphrey Huntoon whose good repute has travelled beyond the limits of his own province, and become familiar to us dwellers across the borders."

Romney Huntoon blushed with pleasure and secretly treasured up the words to say over to his mother; but he received them with some discomposure. To tell the truth, it is not an easy matter to meet a compliment for one's relative; the disclaimers wherewith a man may receive such for himself not quite fitting the situation, yet consanguinity seeming to demand a corresponding degree of modesty.

"My father will feel deeply honored," he murmured, and lost the end he had fashioned for his speech in watching a curl that had fallen forward over Peggy Neville's ear.

Brent was too much occupied with his own thoughts to heed the break in the young man's reply.

"You have been at St. Mary's for some days?" he asked.

"A week yesterday, your Excellency."

"And spent much time on the wharf?"

"The better part of every day, overlooking first the unloading of the tobacco, and then the getting aboard of the farm implements and household stuff I am to carry back to Romney."

"Hm! Perhaps, then, you were witness to the — the unpleasantness that fell out betwixt Captain Ingle and Reuben Early."

"Ay, sir — I saw the blow struck."

"Of your kindness, tell me how it all fell out. The village folk are so hot over the matter 't is passing hard to get a clear story from any of them. Was Richard Ingle drunk or sober?"

"Why, not fully the one or the other, I should say; but more as one who has been in his cups overnight and is at odds with the world next morning."

"And Reuben Early — was he in liquor too?"

"Truth, I think Early was a bit the worse for beer, for he was continually dropping the sacks with which he was loading the vessel under Ingle's direction, and when one slipped into the water, instead of making excuse for himself, he threw

up his silly cap and shouted, "God save the King and Prince Rupert!"

"Fool!"

"Ay, 't was enough to anger any man, and it seemed to drive Ingle mad with passion. 'The King!' he cried; 'I 'd have you know your King is no king; and as for Prince Rupert, if I had him here he should be flogged at the capstan!' Then turning to Early, whose mouth was agape at such treasonable utterances, he let fly a bucket he had in his hand, and hit Early full in the head, knocking him over like an ox. If Early had picked himself up and returned the blow I 'd had some sympathy for him, but instead he went off whimpering and vowing he 'd make complaint and have Ingle under arrest before night."

"A pestilent fellow that Ingle!" muttered Brent; "I 'd have him in irons this day were it not for the trouble over seas; but with King and Parliament at loggerheads we must be civil with both and Ingle hath powerful friends in high places among the Roundheads. But of the quarrel — did you see Richard Ingle after?"

"Nay, but I believe he is still on *The Reformation*, though some say he was seen to board a ship that sailed yesterday for New Netherland, and 't is known the Ingles are on good terms with Governor Stuyvesant, who hath the Dutch hatred of papists."

"For the matter o' that," said Brent, with some bitterness, "he need not have gone further afield than across the river. He would have found enough Catholic-haters in Virginia to protect him."

"We may be over zealous, your Excellency," the young man answered, "but we do not countenance evil-doers, and 't were hard to find in Maryland a cavalier who has the King's cause more at heart than Sir William Berkeley."

"You say truth, Master Huntoon, and do well to maintain the honor of your province against all slander. My regards to Sir William Berkeley when you return — and when is that to be?"

"In two or three days at furthest now. The ketch is already loaded and I tarry only from hour to hour."

"May the ketch and all your other ventures come safe to shore!" said Brent, rising and taking the hand of Huntoon.

"Mistress Neville, I will see you again before my return to St. Gabriel's, and charge myself with any message you may wish to send."

With this adieu the Governor took his leave. The young people, who had risen with him, still stood facing each other in silence, now that they were alone.

"Why do you not take a chair once more?" asked Peggy, fingering the border of her flowered lawn apron.

"I have not been asked," Huntoon responded.

"I feared to detain you from business of more importance," murmured the little hypocrite.

"Mistress Neville," said Romney, "I have known you but seven days."

"Is it really so long?" asked Peggy, demurely looking out at him from behind the protecting curtain of her long lashes.

"So long!" exclaimed the youth. He was only twenty, and the power to receive and parry comes later to men than to girls.

Even Peggy Neville felt a twinge of compunction at his throwing himself thus upon her mercy. "They have been pleasant days," she continued, "and therefore by all the laws of life should have seemed short."

"Why, so they have!" the boy rushed on, — "short as a flash of lightning in the passing, long as July sunlight in the thinking over; and now they are drawing to an end, somehow a darkness seems to fall around me. When I think of sailing down the river, away from the sight of the huddle of cottages, from the great cross in the centre of the village, from the glimpse of this little window that gives on the wharf, my heart sinks."

"I wonder why," said Peggy; but this time she did not look at him.

"May I tell you?"

"No, no — of course not," the girl hastened to say in a quick, business-like voice. "'T is no affair of mine to pry into the feelings of all the young men who come to St. Mary's. Besides, here comes my aunt, and she will be more concerned to bring out wine and seed-cake for your entertainment than to hear of your regrets at parting. However," the tease went on wickedly, "if it would relieve your mind to tell her I will bring the subject before her."

Romney stood still, and looked at her without a word. She had hurt him beyond the power of speech. This first love of his, which he had been cherishing by day and brooding over by night for a whole week, seemed to him to overshadow the world, and that she, the lady of his dreams, should be the one to make light of it was past bearing.

"'*All* the young men who come to St. Mary's,'" he repeated to himself as he strode down the street. "So to her I am no more than one of the crowd of gallants who hang about the corners and cast eyes at the girls in the little church o' Sundays. Oh, but I will make her give me a serious thought yet! She shall know that it is not a ball she holds in her hands, to be tossed about and caught and thrown away, but a man's heart."

Then, as he recalled that dimpling face and those eyelashes sweeping the rich red cheek, he smiled in spite of himself, and fell to thinking

of a little song his mother had sung to him years ago, a song of another capricious damsel, mightily like this provoking Peggy, —

"He kissed her once, he kissed her twice,
Though oft she coyly said him nay;
Mayhap she let him kiss her thrice
Before she bade him go away —
Singing heigh-ho!
Whether or no,
Kiss me again before you go,
Under the trees where the pippins grow."

As he reached the widening of the street in front of the Indian wigwam transformed into a little chapel and dedicated to Our Lady, he was struck with the number of people standing and walking about. It was like an ant-hill suddenly emptied of its toilers. Then he recalled that it was market day at St. Mary's, and that the village was all agog over Dick Ingle. Women stood at the door of their pioneer cabins, their arms akimbo, and their heads bare regardless of the winter winds, giving and getting the latest news. Governor Brent had come last night. That was sure. He had ridden over from St. Gabriel's Manor, where he was visiting his sister, and he had been seen this morning walking about the town. A mighty secrecy had been observed about the object of his coming; but no one doubted it had to do with Ingle.

"'T will go hard with Dick," said one; "the Governor is a just man, but a terror to evil-doers. I miss my guess if Dick and his brother Ralph both know not the feeling of handcuffs ere nightfall."

"Not Ralph!" interrupted another. "What justice were there in punishing the innocent with the guilty? Ralph Ingle is as frank and hearty-spoken a gentleman as there is in Maryland. He comes into my cottage and plays with the baby, and the boys run to the door as soon as ever his voice is heard."

"Ay, but how comes it he is so friendly with that rascal brother of his?"

"Why, blood is thicker than water — even holy water."

A laugh greeted this sally; but the laughers took the precaution to cross themselves.

"You would none of you exercise yourselves much over the intimacy," said a third gossip, "had ye seen as I did the two brothers talking on deck after the row with Early. Ralph told Dick he was quit of him, tired of trying to make a gentleman of him, and wished they might never meet again. He did indeed — I heard it with my own ears."

"That's the most wonderful part of it," said the first speaker; "most of the things you tell you've heard through the ears of some one else."

Gossip number three turned red and opened her mouth to deliver a crushing retort, when she discovered that the attention of her hearers had been distracted by the arrival of a new-comer.

It was Reuben Early, whose wife had bound as big a bandage as possible about his head. He came up to join the group, receiving on all sides gratifying commiserations upon the wound he had been dealt by Richard Ingle's hand; and though he had some difficulty in explaining why he had not returned it, nor made any defence after all his bold talk, he still continued to pose as a hero, and to make his townfellows feel that in his humiliation they had received an individual and collective insult.

"When the villain struck me," he explained, "I was encumbered with the sack of grain I was bearing, and ere I could lay it down and reach my weapon, the fellow had disappeared down the hatchway."

"Come, come, Reuben!" cried a sceptic near-by, "we all know you are readier with your tongue than with either sword or musket; and I for one am not sorry to have you taught a lesson, were it not that the blow was struck at a citizen of St. Mary's, and therefore at us all. I am for punishing Dick Ingle for the assault, yet lightly; but for the treason he spoke he should be hung at the yard-arm of his own ship."

"Not hung perhaps; but surely put in custody of Sheriff Ellyson here," suggested another of the group, who stood in the morning sunlight outside the log cabin which served for a hostelry.

"Aha!" laughed the man next him, "our innkeeper would not see the number of drinkers of his good ale diminished by one. How say you, Master Boniface, would it not be well to compel the traitor to drink himself to death at the expense of the Lord Proprietary?"

All but two of the men laughed at this sally. The innkeeper naturally failed to see the fun of a jest of which he was the butt, and the sheriff took the suggestion into serious consideration.

"By the Saints, it were a good scheme and has much to commend it. It may seem a pity to waste good wine on a bad man, when the one is so scarce and the other so plenty; but it would mightily relieve the authorities. 'Put him in the custody of the sheriff!' you say; and how, pray, am I to hold him when I have no jail save my two hands? Can I lie with him at night and eat and drink by day with my arm locked in his? I would he were at the bottom of the sea!"

"If every man were at the bottom of the sea who has been wished there, it would be hard to find a channel for the ships, and we might walk to England dry-shod!"

It was Giles Brent who spoke, and the men, who had not seen him approach and did not know how much he had overheard, looked somewhat taken aback, for the discussion of public officers and their duties was not looked upon with special favor.

"I tell you, my men," Governor Brent continued, returning their salute with a wave of his hand, "this standing about the door of ale-houses is a poor way of life for pioneers. It breeds idleness, and idleness breeds discontent. Get you all in and drink the King's health at my charge, and then off with you to work; and the more you use your mouths to eat and drink withal, and the less for idle chatter, the better it shall fare with you and your families."

The men, nothing loath to obey the behest, filed into the inn, cheering alternately for the King, Lord Baltimore, Leonard Calvert, the Governor now in England, and his deputy, Giles Brent, the last cheer being the mightiest of all and only drowned by the gurgling of the great draughts of October ale pouring down their throats.

"Hold, Ellyson," said Brent, as the sheriff passed in last of all. "I want a word with you."

"Yes, your Excellency; you do me honor," said Ellyson, doffing his cap of maintenance.

"Does Richard Ingle take his meals on board ship or ashore?"

"I 'm not rightly sure, your Excellency; but I do think he takes his supper here at the inn, and the other meals on his ship."

"Does he come alone?"

"Sometimes alone, but oftener with his brother."

"At what hour does he sup?"

"Oh, any time after the day's work is done, and then sits carousing till all hours. I have seen him drunk enough to light his pipe at a pump ere midnight."

"That is well. A man in his cups may be apprehended, even by a sheriff. Here, read this. 'T is a proclamation bidding him yield himself to your custody before February first. That will put him off the scent, for he will plan to finish loading and slip off at the end of the month. But to let him do this were to encourage all evil-doers and enemies of the Commonwealth; therefore it behooves us to get him under arrest in short order. When he comes to-night, do you invite him to sit down and sup with you. Give him all he will drink, and scrimp not yourself either. Remember you both drink at my charge. Then, when the rest of the drinkers are gone, do you serve your warrant on him, and hold him at your peril till I call for him. Do yonder

fellows know anything of the prospect of the arrest?"

"They said nothing."

"Then they know nothing. I would I could be as sure that when they know nothing they say nothing. Be you silent as the grave. You are a close-tongued fellow enough save when the wine-cup loosens your tongue and lets out your brains, and leaves you rolled up in a corner like a filthy hogshead. But never mind — never mind; you are better than many around you. I give you good-morning."

So the two parted, Ellyson entering the tavern and Brent turning into the path that led to the house of Councillor Neale.

As he passed on his way, he thought to himself, "Pray Heaven he heeds not that caution! If he be not well drunken this night our well-laid plan falls to the ground, and then there 's a pretty muddle."

CHAPTER VI

THE KING'S ARMS

IT was already dark on the night after Giles Brent's talk with young Huntoon, when Captain Richard Ingle entered the doorway of The King's Arms. On the outside there was little to mark the difference between the hostelry and the other log-cabins, except that at right angles both to house and road hung a sign-board decorated with the name of the inn, and bearing below in gaudy colors the standard of the Commonwealth.

Within, the long low-raftered room, despite its bareness, had that air of good cheer which the devil knows how to throw around places where men meet to drink themselves into his likeness.

With his swashbuckler air and swinging bravado of carriage, Ingle was a not unattractive figure. His height was above the average, and he wore his jerkin and slashed doublet jauntily. His face might have had claims to beauty, but for its sinister expression, and to many of those who looked at him this expression, combined with his reckless

bearing, constituted a certain fascination. The hall mark of the devil adds value.

With the smell of the sea which hung about Dick Ingle was associated an air of mystery, as of one who could tell much if he would, and the dignity of a captain who from his quarter-deck might defy king, lords, and commons; though justice might some day reach out its long arm for him ashore, and sweep along with him any rash landsman who ventured on too close an intimacy.

Just now, after his recent treasonable speeches aboard *The Reformation*, any display of acquaintance was held to be specially injudicious, and consequently, though all the men around the inn-board looked up at Captain Ingle's entrance, none moved to make room for him on the bench.

The room was so thick with tobacco smoke that the candles set in pine knots for sockets at various intervals along the board (which was literally a board, supported on horses of wood) cast only a glimmering dimness around them. Ingle raised his hand to his eyes and stood a moment, peering from under it at the table and the group seated around it. As he took in the meaning of the sudden silence and the averted glances, a smile of contempt settled about his mouth.

"Ah, friends," he cried jovially, "I am glad to find so many good fellows met together. Coun-

cillor Neale, I will ask a word with you later about the bill of goods consigned to you."

The councillor cast down his eyes as sheepishly as though all must know the goods were of doubtful repute.

"Cornwaleys, *The Reformation* sails in a day or two, and I advise you to prepare your message of loyalty to the Lord General Cromwell without delay."

Cornwaleys would have given a hundred pounds rather than that any should know he had planned to make his future safe by riding two horses, and making his submission to Parliament while he threw up his cap for the King.

The other men about the board cowered. The whizzing of the lash was in the air, and every back quivered with the expectation that it might feel the next blow.

But having vented his spleen in these unpleasantries, the great man grew affable, and turning to the wall where a large placard was posted, he exclaimed, —

"Ha, Sheriff, here is a letter addressed to thee and me by our worshipful Governor *pro tem.* Let us read it out for the benefit of the company, who have not book-learning enough to decipher it for themselves. 'T is writ in a shaking hand, too, especially the word 'treason,' and in truth it is as well it should be a trifle vague, for who

shall write 'treason' firmly nowadays, when the war has left it so dubious who is our lawful master that none can say but a year hence the very name of this tavern shall be changed from *The King's Arms* to *General Cromwell's Legs?*"

A titter ran round the room.

"Hush, gentlemen! He who laughs makes himself sharer in the jest, and a jest at royalty is treason — at least, so says our king-loving Governor. Listen!"

And in a sing-song voice Ingle began to read aloud from the placard, —

"20th January.

"PROCLAMATION.

"I do hereby require, in his Majesty's name, Richard Ingle, mariner, to yield his body to Robert Ellyson, sheriff of this county, before the first day of February next, to answer to such crimes of treason as on his Majesty's behalf shall be objected against him, upon his utmost peril of the law in that behalf; and I do further require all persons that can say or disclose any matter of treason against the said Richard Ingle to inform his Lordship's attorney of it at some time before the said court, to the end it may be then and there prosecuted.

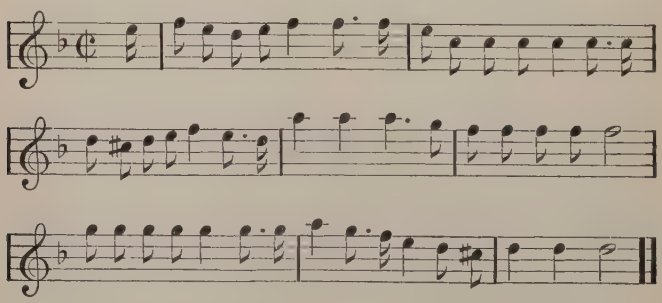
"G. Brent.

"You see, gentlemen, the proclamation grants me till the first of February to deliver myself up; therefore my good friend Ellyson yonder must needs keep his hands off these ten days. Landlord, bring out your ale, and all good fellows shall drink with me a health to — let me see; shall it

be Charles, or Oliver? And everlasting damnation to the enemies of — shall we say the King, or the Parliament?"

The men who sat around were ready enough for a drink, but they had no mind for such dangerous toasts, and great was the relief when one shrewd fellow cried out, "Oh, quit your politics, Dick, and let us drink to the next voyage of *The Reformation*. And now do you give us a song, for there is none can sing like you when you can abstain from swearing long enough. But first, here's to our town, and I give you our rallying cry, — 'Hey for Saint Mary's, and wives for us all!'"

Ingle joined with good-humor in the ringing cheer that followed. "Here goes, then," he said, as the landlord brought in the tankards. "You may guzzle while I sing, and for the benefit of you family men who are so fond of shouting 'Wives for us all!' I'll make it a song of married life. 'T is sweetly entitled *The Dumb Maid*, and runs thus, —



"'There was a country blade
Who did wed a pretty maid,
And he kindly conducted her
Home, home, home.
There in her beauty bright
Lay his whole delight;
But alack and alas, she was
Dumb, dumb, dumb.'

"Now, gentlemen, you might think this lucky husband would have been content with his good fortune, and let well enough alone; but no, he was for having a perfect wife — which was as if he would have had a white blackbird or a moral courtier or a wise king; so —

"'To the doctor he did her bring
For to cut her chattering string,
And he let her tongue on
The run, run, run.
In the morning she did rise,
And she filled his house with cries,
And she rattled in his ears like a
Drum, drum, drum.'

"Now the stupid oaf began to discover his blunder, — but perhaps you 've had enough."

Cries of "Go on! Go on!"

"Well, then, listen to his fate and take warning, —

"'To the doctor he did go
With his heart well filled with woe,
Crying, "Doctor I am quite
Undone, done, done.

Now she 's turned a scolding wife
And I 'm weary of my life,
For I cannot make her hold
Her tongue, tongue, tongue."

" ' The doctor thus did say —
" When she went from me away
She was perfectly cured of being
Dumb, dumb, dumb.
But it's beyond the art of man,
Let him do the best he can,
For to make a scolding woman hold
Her tongue, tongue, tongue." ' "

Roars of applause greeted the ending of the performance. In the midst of it Ingle crossed the room to the end of the table where Sheriff Ellyson was seated.

" Come, Sheriff, since you and I are met, let us sit down at the further end of the board where our conversation may not disturb these gentlemen."

With this he drew up a stool for himself, and as the mugs of ale were quaffed and the pipes emptied, one after another of the bibbers and smokers reached for his cap, and moved out into the darkness with a muttered good-night, till at last none were left but Neale and Cornwaleys, two men in high standing in the colony and close friends of Governor Brent.

Meanwhile Captain Ingle made vast inroads

upon the mighty haunch of venison which the landlord set before him with obsequious attention, and a pasty with five small birds stewed together vanished into his capacious stomach without appearing to diminish his appetite. "Let us have prawns," he called to the landlord, "prawns and cheese to finish with, and brown ale from one of the hogsheads I brought in *The Reformation*. I always call for that," he added with a wink to Cornwaleys, "when I want something extra good. When you drink what you bring, you know what you get."

"Ay," responded Ellyson jovially, "trundle it up, landlord, cask and all, and we will help ourselves. You may go to bed and welcome, for we mean to make a night on't. Who gets the ale-cask needs no host."

"But who will lock the door?"

"Why, we, to be sure!"

"Faith!" cried the landlord with a shout of laughter, "I've seen ye both after a night's drinking bout, and neither one of you could keep your legs or lift hand to mouth, let alone turning key or drawing bolt."

"Then we'll stay till you are up in the morning," roared Ingle, "and woe to the thief who dares intrude upon the majesty of the law as represented by Sheriff Ellyson, or the rights of freemen supported by the sword of Richard Ingle."

With this the freebooter drew his weapon and after waving it round his head in token of what marauders might expect, laid it on the bench beside him.

The innkeeper, overawed by the sight of such prospective prowess, began to think what a fine thing it would be to substitute this gallant blade for the pale little sheriff.

"I 'll tarry at least till these other gentlemen are gone home," he said, and betook himself to the other end of the table. Neale and Cornwaleys loitered a few minutes, then rose with a yawn and a stretching of the arms and legs.

"Give you good evening, gentlemen!" Neale said to those at the end.

"Good-night, Sir Landlord, and thanks for your good fire and better ale!" called Cornwaleys, following him lazily out at the door.

But outside their idle lounging ceased. They drew close together and whispered anxiously. The watch passed. They only drew closer into the shadow and let him go by. Then they pressed their faces to the hole in the shutters, and stood gazing at the pair inside, who sat quaffing tankard after tankard by the wavering light of the candles and the red glow of the embers on the hearth.

A few moments later they were joined by a third man. A Monmouth cap was pulled low

over his eyes, and the collar of his cloak raised to meet it so that none could see his features. Neale and Cornwaleys showed no surprise at his approach, but seemed to be awaiting him.

"How goes it?" asked the new-comer in a whisper.

"To a charm so far," answered Neale.

"I confess I like not the part we are playing."

"Nor I either, but it must be played. The villagers are much roused against Ingle, yet have a group of them been drinking at his cost at the tavern to-night, and whatever is done by the authorities will give offence in some quarter."

"Ay, and his punishment most of all. There be many that like him for his dare-devil ways, and more that tolerate him for the sake of his brother."

"Ralph is a fine fellow," said Cornwaleys, "and Dick himself is open-handed."

"Ay, and open-mouthed," added Neale. "Some daring souls may whisper touching matters of state; but he must needs shout out his opinions louder than any Roundhead in Parliament."

"The fool!" muttered Brent (for it was he who had just come up).

"Fool he is," answered Neale; "who ever knew Dick Ingle other than a fool? But who

shall say it was not truth he spoke when he said the King was no king."

"Well, well," Brent said impatiently, "waste no words on idle speculations; but let us keep our wits to try how we may steer a safe course between the devil and the deep sea. If we apprehend this man 't is an affront to the Parliament to whom he swears allegiance. If we apprehend him not, 't is as good as to make ourselves partakers in his *lèse-majesté*. So 't is clear the only course is both to apprehend him and to let him go. All the people will hear of the proclamation and of my order of arrest. This will satisfy their sense of justice, and so are we quit of our official duties. And afterward if the sheriff, through some carelessness and neglect, let Richard Ingle go free and he reach his own quarter-deck and set sail for England before ever he be caught — why — "

"Sh!" whispered Cornwaleys, "speak softer, or all will fail. Neale, you have your eye to the chink in the shutter?"

"Ay, and can see as if I were in the room. It is hard to say which is drinking the harder."

"No man can keep his legs with that quantity of ale in his belly," answered Cornwaleys; "we shall find them in the morning on the tavern floor."

"Hm!" reflected Neale, "there is some dan-

ger o' that and 't will not suit our plans neither. We 'd best stir Ellyson a bit."

With this he shuffled his feet and moved the shutter back and forth. The sound reached the ear of Ellyson. He paused with his mug halfway to his lips, and then, setting his flagon down hard on the board, he rose, and putting his hand into the breast of his jerkin drew forth something white.

"The fun begins," whispered Neale, flattening his nose against the shutter in the effort to lose no glimpse of what was going forward.

"We must be ready to rush in if Ingle uses him too hard," announced Cornwaleys.

The two men watched with all their eyes, and this is what they saw: —

The giant, having the paper thrust in his face, grew red with rage and strove to rise and reach for his sword, but only succeeded in falling across the table, his hair trailing into the mug of ale. Then the nimble little sheriff, who was perhaps less drunk than he had feigned, whipped around the table and drawing a length of cord from his capacious jerkin succeeded in binding the wrists of his adversary before he could rise. Ingle roared out curses.

The landlord shouted from his bed to know what was the matter.

"Oh, 't is naught. Give yourself no trouble in

the matter. Captain Ingle has had overmuch drink even for him, and I am taking him home."

"There seems to be a break in our fine plan," murmured Neale. "What if Ellyson prove the better man of the two?"

"Rubbish! How can he?"

But a weak arm backed by a clear head can do more than mighty muscles befuddled with beer. Ellyson rapidly made fast his cord, and drawing out a stouter one tied that too, and tugging might and main pulled the captain off his stool headlong to the ground, where he lay for an instant grovelling, and then, gathering himself up, staggered a few paces to the door.

"Thank ye for that, my fine fellow!" said Ellyson. "I could scarce have got ye so far without your own help."

The next move of the little sheriff was a clever one. Hard by the door stood a hand-car used for the moving of casks to the slant of the cellarway. Its wheels were made of sections of pine logs revolving on rudely fashioned axles. This car Ellyson rolled directly in front of the doorway, and then getting behind Ingle gave him a push which sent him forward face first upon the car.

"What say ye now, Neale?" whispered Cornwaleys, pressing closer than ever into the shadow.

"Say? I say the devil is let loose and help-

ing the little sheriff. Let us follow. His luck may have a turn."

Down the street went the four men, Ellyson grunting and sweating under his burden, but full of the joy of conquest over an unequal foe, and of the complacency born of a sense of duty fulfilled, combined with the hope of preferment. Already he saw himself promoted to fat office, perhaps to the Council itself. But at this juncture a strange thing happened.

The night air had begun to cool Ingle's hot head and clear the beer-befuddled brain. With a mighty effort he tore his arms loose from the encircling cords, and reaching for the poniard in his breast sprang from the car.

Luckily for Ellyson, Ingle's legs were still unsteady. As it was, the doughty little man was consumed with terror at the sight of the giant lunging about with his weapon gleaming in his hand, as he waved it wildly and aimlessly about his head. In his terror Ellyson called aloud for help; but excitement made his voice so weak it could scarcely be heard a hundred feet away.

"The end has come," said Neale and Cornwaleys in a breath.

Then to their dismay, they saw the door of a cottage open and a young man dash out half-clad, but with a loaded pistol in his hand.

"Who cried for help?"

"I, the sheriff! I hold an order from Governor Brent to arrest this man, and I call upon you as a good citizen of Maryland to come to my aid."

Ingle by this time had got his back against a tree, and stood there waving his dagger and calling to his foes to come on if they dared.

"I am no citizen of Maryland," said Romney Huntoon; "I come from Virginia, but I 've no objection to bearing a hand in the arrest of this man, for I heard his traitorous ranting, and I vowed then to do him a bad turn if ever it came in my way."

"Your chance is come," muttered the sheriff. "Do you stand here and cover him with your pistol, and I will go round behind the tree and try if I may not bind him where he stands. Ingle," he added, turning to the other, "if you move you are a dead man."

"*Hold! in the King's name!*"

The three men started as if a cannon had exploded in their midst. The surprise even sobered Ingle. He looked up in speechless amazement as Councillor Neale and Captain Cornwaleys strode up, and with all the double weight of civil and military authority called out to Ingle to surrender.

Seeing his position desperate he sullenly obeyed.

"March in front," commanded Cornwaleys. "Ellyson, do you walk beside him. Master

Huntoon, if you will favor us with your company and your weapons, you will oblige us by your escort down the road as far as the wharf where *The Reformation* lies."

"*The Reformation?*" exclaimed Huntoon.

"I said so, I think," answered Cornwaleys.

"But — but — you do not understand," stammered Ellyson; "I am acting by Governor Brent's command. I am by no means to lose sight of the prisoner until further commands from him."

"You have fulfilled your commission," said Neale, "and stand discharged of all responsibility. Master Huntoon, I charge you take notice that Sheriff Ellyson is hereby relieved of all blame in this matter, whatever the outcome, and that I do hereby take upon myself all the burden of Governor Brent's displeasure if such there be."

"The Councillor has spoken," said Cornwaleys, "and with my approbation. Forward, march!"

The walk down the hill to the wharf was covered in perfect silence. Ingle walked between Ellyson and Cornwaleys, able to keep his feet with occasional support from his escort. As the men halted on the wharf, Neale stepped forward.

"Richard Ingle," said he, "are you drunk or sober?"

"Sober enough, as you shall some day learn that have put this affront upon me."

"Then listen and give heed to the words I speak. Because of your treasonable talk, your ill conduct, and your disturbance of the peace, you do richly deserve the most that the laws of Maryland could pronounce as your punishment."

"Ay, that he does!" murmured Huntoon.

"Then why not give it to him?" grumbled Ellyson, loath to see the prize he had captured at such expense of difficulty and danger slip through his fingers in the moment of triumph.

"Be silent, Sheriff! It is not in your province to criticise your superiors. Ingle, we shall now put you aboard ship and give you six hours to make good your departure. But if at dawn so much as a topmast of *The Reformation* be seen from St. Mary's, we will have her overhauled and her captain strung up at the yard-arm."

Ingle's senses were returning fast, and he responded to the Councillor's words with a smile, the cool impudence of which irritated Neale beyond endurance. He saw that the sailors were gathering on the deck, and that time was short.

"Seize him!" he cried suddenly to Huntoon and Cornwaleys; "seize the cur and toss him on board his vessel as he deserves."

Huntoon and Cornwaleys, delighted at the chance to wreak even a portion of their vengeance, needed no second bidding. Cornwaleys seized his head and Huntoon his feet, and with a mighty

swing they flung him clear of the wharf and landed him in the middle of the deck amid a circle of sailors half angry, half grinning.

"Remember!" cried Neale, warningly.

"A good riddance!" exclaimed Cornwaleys as they walked away.

"Yes, if he stays rid," answered Neale, doubtfully. "Ellyson, you are to be silent on this night's doings."

"I know my duty," said Ellyson, sullenly, "even when I am not permitted to do it. But I know not how I am to answer to Governor Brent for this night's work."

Neale leaned over and whispered some words in his ear which seemed to amaze him, the more so as something which showed under the struggling moonbeams round and yellow and shining was slipped into his hand by Cornwaleys on the other side.

"Master Huntoon, we trust to your honor."

"You may," Huntoon responded with some haughtiness; and he turned upon his heel and strode back to his lodgings, thanking Heaven that he was a Virginian.

CHAPTER VII

IN GOOD GREEN WOOD

"NOW what say you, Mistress Peggy?"

"Say? What could I say to such an offer save that, if my aunt allows, 't will give me more pleasure than aught else that could befall. I have longed for months to see your sister Mary and St. Gabriel's, and now to see them, and besides to have sight of my brother and of Mistress Calvert —"

"To say nothing of a ride through the forest under escort of the Governor of the province!"

"Why, to tell the truth, it is that only which gives me pause, for I know well that he has grave matters of state on his mind, and would fain perhaps be alone to think them over, whereas I am such a chattering magpie, as my brother has often told me, that no man can have a thought in his head when I am about."

"And how do you know, little Peggy, that that is not just the reason why I have asked for your company? It is quite true that I am vexed and worried and harried half out of my senses over

recent affairs here in St. Mary's, — affairs which call for anxious meditation and drastic action; but for this one day I would fain forget that I am a grizzled man weighed down with matters heavy enough to sink him, and make believe that I am a light-hearted lad again wandering about the forest with a maiden as care-free as he. We will have a merry ride of it, and we will stop by the wayside and build a fire in the snow to cook our noonday meal."

"But — but — I know not how to cook," Peggy confessed with much embarrassment.

"Not know how to cook! For shame! and you a pioneer — I must have speech of your aunt, and counsel her to take order with you at once till the deficiency be mended. But for this once it will not matter, for I am taking back with me to Kent Fort a lame servant, Anne by name, owned by Sir Edmund Plowden and lent by him to my sister Margaret. She will be of our party, and likewise Councillor Neale and Captain Cornwaleys. So with them to guard us against foes without, and her to fortify us against the worse enemy of hunger within, you and I may have good hopes of coming safely to St. Gabriel's."

"O Aunt, Aunt!" Peggy called out, "his Excellency has asked me to ride with him to St. Gabriel's. Only think of it — to St. Gabriel's, and this very day!"

"Foolish child!" said her aunt, with reproof in her voice. "You can think of nothing but the pleasure of the moment. How could you manage your home-coming? And how do you know that Mistress Brent desires your company?"

"If you will permit me to take upon myself the burden of answering your questions, Madam, I think I can set your mind at rest on both points. My sister Margaret has in mind a journey to St. Mary's from Kent Fort, and will stop on her way to pick up your niece and bring her home to you in safety. As for the other question, it could only be asked by one who knew little of Mary Brent. Why, I have seen her eyes light up with joy when a total stranger stopped at the door for a meal or a night's lodging, and at a friend's coming she is clean daft with pleasure. Between you and me too she has a particular and foolish fondness for this saucy slip of a niece of yours, and will count it a red-letter day when she sees the baggage jump off her donkey at the gate, and come running in at the door. Oh, there will be great rejoicing at the manor this night, — I can promise you that."

The Governor of Maryland was not lightly to be denied. So it was settled that Peggy was to go, and the saddle-bags were filled on one side with her clothing, since, even in the wilderness, a

maid must needs carry her bit of finery, and in the other side her aunt's hospitable care had stored away an ample supply of bread and meat and wine, with other eatables and drinkables to be heated in the ashes of the noonday fire.

When the two donkeys stood at the gate and Mistress Peggy and the lame serving-woman were mounted there was no happier or prouder maid in the province than Margaret Neville. Giles Brent joined the procession at the edge of the village. He was seated on Governor Calvert's horse, one of the few in the colony, and his large frame with its red-lined cloak showed well on the big black Flemish steed.

Behind him walked three men. Yes, Peggy distinctly counted three, though Governor Brent had named only two. There was Councillor Neale, with his heavy staff and big foreign boots, and Captain Cornwaleys, brave in his military uniform with gilt trimmings; but who was the third? Not — surely not — Oh, no, nothing could be more unlikely! — and yet — Yes, there was no doubt of it; however the thing had come about, the man who walked between them was Romney Huntoon. If there had been any doubt in her mind at the first glance, it was set at rest as they drew nearer, for the young man stepped forward close to the little brown donkey, and sweeping off his hat laid bare his dark curls, and

then looked up at Peggy as though he had been the devoutest of Catholics, and she his patron saint.

Now, I will not deny that Peggy Neville was good to look at; but never did any one bear less resemblance to a saint than she as she sat perched upon her mottled brown and gray donkey, her saucy, smiling face peeping out from its scarlet hood, her cheeks as red as the wool covering around them, and her brown eyes sparkling with fun and health and girlish glee. Her first care was to give this youth fully to understand that it was with no thought of him she had joined this expedition. She took pains, therefore, to throw an extra amount of surprise into her tone as she exclaimed, —

"Master Huntoon! — and pray how happens it that you are acting as escort to the Governor of Maryland? Or is it but out of courtesy that you are walking with us as far as the gates of St. Mary's?"

"As far and farther," answered the young man, proudly.

"Not to St. Gabriel's!"

"And why not, pray? Did you think you were the only person honored with an invitation? May not I too be a bidden guest?"

"But you were to sail for the York River to-morrow or next day."

"Ay," answered Huntoon, with some embarrassment, "I was; but there have arisen certain complications with which I chanced to be connected, and I have received a request which was as near a command as befitted the message of a Governor of one province to the subject of another, asking me to tarry for a few days yet and to set out with him this morning for St. Gabriel's. It was not till an hour ago," he added, "that I learned what cause I should have to give thanks for my assent."

"Come, come, young people!" called Giles Brent; "my horse has more sense than you, for he is pawing the ground and eager to be off. Since we can move but at a snail's pace along the trail, which is harder than ever to keep, with the snow on it, we'd best waste no time. I will ride in front to prospect, and the women shall follow. Do you, Huntoon, walk by Mistress Neville's bridle, and Neale and Cornwaleys shall follow as a rear guard keeping a sharp look-out, for wolves and other wild beasts are grown desperate with hunger in this cold weather, and may be met when least expected."

The little procession took up its line of march along the narrow street and out at the gate which gave upon the road leading across country. As they wound up a hill that lay behind the town Peggy turned in her saddle for a last look at

the huddle of log cabins. Hers was one of those tender hearts that can cling to bare walls, so they be hung with associations.

The scene on which the girl's eyes rested was fair enough in itself to need no associations to give it interest. From the height she could look down upon the broad, placid river lying in a series of loops like little lakes. For a distance of eight miles it stretched away blue as the sky above it till it merged itself in the dimmer gray of the Potomac. Across the river rose gently swelling hills, and there in the foreground like a giant sentinel loomed the great mulberry tree which had witnessed Calvert's dealings with the natives, which bore on its trunk placard and proclamation, and, in short, served most of the purposes of a town hall.

Peggy looked long over the enchanting prospect, then letting her eyes fall upon the hamlet of St. Mary's she scanned the little group of houses, the great cross in the centre, the smoke curling up from the mud chimneys, the blue reach of the stream at the foot of the bluff. Suddenly she gave an exclamation of amazement.

"Why, where is Captain Ingle's ship?" she asked, turning from one to another of her companions.

No one answered.

"I saw it last evening at sunset," she went on.

"I am sure of it, for I went down to the wharf with our serving-man to buy grain, and I asked Captain Ingle when he would be off, and he said, 'Not for some time;' and that when he went he would fire a salute of five guns in my honor."

"'T is like his insolence," muttered Huntoon between his teeth.

"Yes, but how is it that he is gone? Surely, you who are about the village so much must have heard something of the matter."

The mysterious silence continued a moment longer. Then Giles Brent said repressively,—

"Master Ingle sailed last night."

"Oh, so you *do* know all about it," cried the irrepressible Peggy.

"I know nothing to speak of," answered Brent, in so significant a tone that even Peggy could find courage for no rejoinder, but turned to Huntoon and bade him walk a little faster, or the donkey would tread upon his heels.

Huntoon strode on as perfectly happy as is often given to mortals to be in this sadly mixed world. There is an elation in the solitude of a wilderness at any time, a sense of freedom, of room for soul-expansion, and there is a beauty in a snow-clad forest that summer cannot match. The shadows lay in long blue patches on the snow, the pine trees held a load of white on

their wide-spreading branches, each clump of green capped with glittering frost. The gaunt branches of oak and maple etched themselves against the blue of the morning sky. Everything in nature was radiant. Was it likely that the heart of the young man who walked with the rein over his arm was less jubilant than the scene around him?

One thing only troubled him.

He could think of nothing to say.

At last he saw a bunch of scarlet berries peeping out of the snow at the roots of a great pine tree. He stepped aside and picked them. When he came back he handed them to Peggy.

"What are these for?" she asked.

"I thought you might wear them."

"So I do not look well enough as I am?"

"I said not so."

"No, but you thought I could look better, and so I could not have been perfect in your eyes."

"They hang offerings on the neck of the statue of the Madonna. It is not that she may look better; but I suppose it brings her nearer to see her wearing their gifts, be they never so humble."

"You are quite a courtier, Master Huntoon," Peggy answered with a nervous laugh; "you are thrown away upon these colonial wilds and

should betake yourself to Whitehall. The King would doubtless lend a favorable ear to your silver tongue."

"Alas!" sighed Romney, in the folly of his youth, "what care I what the *King* might say, if the *Queen* will not listen to me?"

What further softness he might have ventured on, no man knoweth, for there is no setting limits to the weakness of lovers; but his speech was interrupted by the crack of the fowling-piece from behind, and looking back they saw Cornwaleys stooping to pick up a brace of quail which his gun had just brought down; and which he straightway tossed over the saddle of Anne, the serving-woman, bidding her pick them as she rode.

The sun climbed higher and higher till its genial warmth began to make itself felt. The icicles let fall drop after drop of water, slowly trickling themselves away. The snow-banks melted into gurgling streams, which ran along on the surface till they sank noiseless into the softened ground. The air, balmy with the scent of pine trees and mild with the bracing mildness of dry midwinter, pulsated in the perpendicular rays of the noonday sunlight. "Come, friends," called Giles Brent, reining in his horse and turning in his saddle to await the arrival of the rest of his party, who could by no means keep the pace he

set, "I know not how it is with the rest of you, but one man here hath an appetite which tells him that the dinner hour is come."

"Here is another!" cried Cornwaleys.

"Ay, and a third," came from Neale.

"How say you, Huntoon, has your walk given you a zest for an hour's rest and a bite of good victual?"

"I?" stammered Huntoon. "Why, to say truth, I thought we had but just set out."

At this Brent laughed and cast a meaning glance at Peggy, who colored redder than the bunch of berries she had tucked into the front of her cloak.

"There may be a magic in the bridle-rein of beauty to ward off hunger and fatigue from him who touches it; but the rest of us poor mortals have felt the pangs of both; so, as we are come to a clearing, with two logs convenient for a seat, I counsel that we make a halt and build a fire wherewith to test Anne's skill as a cook."

Peggy slipped from her saddle and opening the bags brought out the bread and meat and wine. Cornwaleys spitted the birds upon his sword, and Anne twirled them before the fire, seasoning them as they cooked. The men sat on the logs, and Peggy laughed and sang and poured forth a flood of mirth and gaiety which beguiled the anxious men about her from all

thought of care and worriment, while she herself was like a meadow lark intoxicated with its own music.

"Is it all your fancy painted — this ride through the forest?" asked Governor Brent, smiling as he seated himself beside Peggy.

"I should say so! — all and more — the very happiest day I have ever known. I feel as if I were a snow-bird picking up crumbs here in the desert. I think I will never live in a house more. I would we were all going back together," added Peggy, after a little pause.

"But going back you will have my sister Margaret, and she is worth us all."

"Shall I not be afraid of her?"

"No-o," answered Brent, conscious that he had known times when he was. Then, loyal to kinship, he continued, "Margaret is a fine fellow. She lives out the motto of Lord Baltimore, 'Deeds are masculine, words feminine.'"

"Oh, I am sure I should be afraid with her!"

"No, you will not. Margaret's words have both weight and wit, and her wit bites sometimes; but it is like a blooded dog and will not hurt a friend. How often I have wished for her trenchant common-sense when we were sitting round the council table and the men droning folly. If she came in it would be like a north wind clearing the air of dulness."

"Ah, Huntoon is coming this way with a cup of sack. I like that youth. There is meat in his discourse."

"Oh — ay — *veal*," answered Peggy, scornfully.

"Hush, you naughty girl! He will hear you. Here, Huntoon. Pass the cup. Drink all of you to the happiest day Mistress Peggy has ever known, and may there be many more like them!"

When the noonday meal was ended, the party took up the line of march once more, but this time Neale walked by the governor's saddle.

"It is an ugly business — a very ugly business," Brent began.

"Ay, it could scarce have turned out worse."

"So many heard the row that the tale can scarce be suppressed, and Ellyson is full of wrath over what he calls his wrongs."

"We will advise together yonder at St. Gabriel's. Neville is ever rich in suggestions, and this young Virginian behind us has a ready wit of his own. We must bring the matter before the Council; but they will be sure to see it in the same light as we."

"They may, and they may not," answered Neale. "The chief business of councils from the beginning of the world has been to find a scapegoat and then to send him out, as the Hebrews did theirs, loaded with the sins of the nation."

"Nay, take it not so to heart! You did but as I should have done in your place, and if the Council resent the escape of Ingle and fear to involve themselves in the King's displeasure they must deal with me as well as you. We are both in the same boat. Faith," Brent added as they came to a swampy place, "it would be well to have an actual boat if we come to many spots like this. It should be one of the first pieces of work done in the province to lay a road where a Christian may travel without losing his way or wading to his chin. Climb up behind my saddle, and my horse shall save your heels."

Neale did as he was bid, and they waited to see how the rest would manage. Anne was transferred to a seat behind Mistress Neville, and Huntoon and Cornwaleys mounted the maid's donkey. Their legs were so long and the donkey's so short that they were forced to hold their knees half-way to their chins, and cut so sorry a figure that the others who were safely across stood shaking their sides with laughter.

Cornwaleys, being over thirty and a man of sense, joined in the laughter; but Romney Huntoon, being twenty and in love, turned sulky, and walked along in would-be dignified silence in his old place at Peggy's bridle. As he grew solemn she grew lively, and entertained him with rambling tales of her wild doings before ever she came out

of England, how she had ridden a horse after all the grooms had given him up, how she had stolen away from home and gone down the lane at midnight to get her future told by an old gypsy woman.

In spite of himself Huntoon's interest kindled.

"These gypsy horoscopes have something uncannily like truth in them," he said. "Tell me, did the old crone predict aught about — about your marriage?"

"Oh, ay, to be sure. What gypsy would ever get her palm crossed with silver twice by a maiden, if she failed to promise her a husband?"

"So she described him —"

"To the length of his shoe-string and the color of his doublet."

"Hm! What said she of his looks?"

Peggy cast a malicious look at the dark curls and the clean lip and chin beside her.

"Oh, she set him off to the top of my satisfaction! He was to be like a Viking of old, with fair hair and mustachios like that —" and Peggy twirled her fingers off at either side of her dimples.

"I am glad to know the manner of man you do prefer," said Romney, stiffly, and they went on in silence for several minutes, and Mistress Peggy quite at her ease nevertheless. Finally

she broke the pause, saying, "Do you remember what night the last was?"

"Surely I do, for I noted it on Governor Brent's order for Ingle's arrest posted on the tavern door. 'T was the twentieth of January."

"Ay, the twentieth; and what night was that?"

"In truth I know not. Being no Papist I keep scant account of Saints' days."

"Nor I either for the most part; but this was a very particular night indeed." Then, with great impressiveness, "*It was the Eve of St. Agnes.*"

"And what of that?"

"Why, 't is on that night every maid may see her future husband, — that is, if she have the wit to go about it the right way."

"And did you go about it the right way?"

Peggy nodded.

"And after what fashion was that?"

"Why, after dusk I went to my chamber as usual, and I took off my garter — you must, you know, or the charm will not work. It must be the left garter too, so I took it, and knit three knots in it, and then with my eyes shut I said the rhyme —"

"What rhyme?"

"Stupid! You don't seem to know anything. Why, this rhyme, of course, —

" 'I knit this knot, this knot I knit
To know the thing I know not yet —
That I may see
The man that shall my husband be,
Not in his best or worst array
But what he weareth every day,
That I to-morrow may him ken
From among all other men.' "

"And then did you see him?"

"No, not yet. After I had said the charm I lay down and folded my hands like St. Agnes, and sure enough as soon as I fell asleep a young man appeared before me. There he stood, as large as life and as clear as day."

"Yes," said Romney, eagerly; "and what like was he?"

"Why, there 's the queer thing," answered Peggy, "his mouth and his curls and his odd-shaped nose were the image of thine."

"What is wrong with my nose? I have always thought well of it —"

"Oh, 't is a proper nose enough. No doubt an excellent and serviceable nose for all practical purposes; but for pure beauty it might be better without the little hump in the middle of the bridge, and with the nostrils set closer — but no matter! such as it is, the vision bore it too, and the eyes were like also and the brows. There was the whole face and figure, so like that any

seeing them would have cried out, ' 'T is Master Huntoon to the life.' "

" Peggy ! "

" But — "

" Nay, no buts — "

"I must, for 't is the strangest of all — *but* his doublet was as like as two peas to the one Captain Cornwaleys wears this morning, and his figure was the captain's too, height and all. Now, what is a poor maid to do under such distracting confusions ? "

" Mistress Neville, you are a coquette."

Peggy raised her eyebrows till they arched like a rainbow.

" I 'd rather be a tailor and make coats for the moon than fit myself to your humors."

" Every man knows best what trade fits him ; and now you have spoken of it, the goose doth seem your proper symbol.

" Yes," Romney went on, growing more and more nettled, " the moon changes but every quarter, while to meet the changes of your whims a man must be on tip-toe every hour."

" Tip-toe — ah, yes ! now I do recall that the vision *was* on tip-toe and looking first at the moon and then at me, as though he knew not which he liked the best."

" It is my belief you never saw any such vision."

" Perhaps I was mistook. Anyway, the charm

has not come true, for it said I was to meet the man I should marry to-day, and you see for yourself he is not here. Now my limbs are weary sitting so long; I think I will try walking."

With this she slipped from her saddle and walked on a few steps in advance of Romney, humming as she went, —

> "'I am as I am, and so will I be;
> But how that I am, none knoweth truly;
> Be it ill, be it well, be I bond, be I free,
> I am as I am, and so will I be.'"

There was a peculiar quality in Peggy's voice that made it an interpreter of her personality. It had as many changes in it as her moods. Now it sounded like a church bell over distant meadows, now like a child praying at its mother's knee, and then would come a sudden break of laughter like the trill of a bobolink shooting Parthian arrows of song as he flies.

Huntoon followed her, watching the scarlet cloak against the green background of the pines, and the stray curls that the wind blew backward as she walked. Neale and Cornwaleys were far behind beyond the turn in the road. At length he could bear it no longer. They were alone. He drew closer and whispered something in her ear.

"Indeed! And pray what of it?" answered the girl, coolly.

"I will tell you what of it," said the young man between his teeth. "I am not to be treated as I have seen you treat those tame gallants in the town back there. When I tell you I love you, you may refuse the love and you may say me nay; but you shall hear me out with respect, and you shall give me a serious answer, as the true love of an honorable man deserves whether it be returned or no."

Peggy did not turn, but she listened. This masterful note in his voice was a new thing. She could scarcely have told whether she liked it or resented it — perhaps a little of both. Certainly she was not inclined to accept it meekly or without protest. As Huntoon finished speaking, Peggy had just bent forward a pine bough that she might pass without stepping in the mud. A wicked impulse seized the girl, and releasing the branch suddenly she stepped aside, and the bough struck Huntoon sharply in the face, his cheek reddening under the blow of its stiff needles.

In an instant Peggy was sorry for her naughty trick, and turned with an apology on her lips; but without a word Huntoon seized her in his arms, and kissed her passionately.

A red spot of anger showed itself in Peggy

Neville's cheek. She stopped and stamped her foot.

"How dare you?" she exclaimed.

Romney made no answer — only stood looking at her. At last he said, "I forgive you."

This was too much.

What Peggy might have said in answer can never be set down, for at this moment the donkey, whose rein had slipped off Huntoon's arm, finding himself free of restraint, kicked up his heels and set off at full gallop along the path. Huntoon started after him at his fastest pace, whilst Peggy could not to save her life refrain from bursting into a fit of laughter at this undignified ending of a lovers' quarrel.

As the donkey, and Huntoon following after, rushed past Brent, the Governor's horse shied so violently into the bushes that the rider had hard work to keep his seat. In his vexation Brent called out, —

"I would there were as many donkeys in the province with four feet as with two. Chase him, Huntoon! Not that way! — to the left — to the left!"

Huntoon had lost sight of the donkey; but now catching the last words, he turned to the left, following the trail of the animal's feet in the new-fallen snow. Brent paused a moment and then started after him, for it was no light matter to be

lost in the woods, and the path the young man had taken was an unfinished one ending in a tangle, though a side path connected it with the main road to St. Mary's.

The fallen leaves lying thick in the forest path crackled like brown icicles as they crisped beneath the horse's hoofs, and Brent held a tight rein to prevent his slipping. Huntoon's pace was swifter and he was gaining rapidly ; but before he had gone fifty rods, he stopped suddenly.

"My God!" he cried. His breath came in deep gasps, and the sweat stood out in beads on his forehead.

"Huntoon! Huntoon! Where are you?"

"Here."

"Where 's your voice, man? I can scarce hear it. And how white you are, like one who has seen a ghost."

"I have. LOOK THERE!"

CHAPTER VIII

A CLUE

AT Huntoon's exclamation, Giles Brent dashed forward still faster, and then he too stopped short and stood at gaze, for there in the centre of the blazed path lay the body of a dead priest, his cloak and cassock showing black against the whiteness around, his arms outstretched as if on a cross.

The snow lay upon his breast in delicate, ruffling drifts; above him circled a hawk with ominous, flapping wings; around, far as eye could reach, stretched the interminable forest. Utter solitude! Complete isolation from humankind! Yet from that solitary figure stretched threads of destiny which should be found twisted close about the heartstrings of many fellow-beings.

With a shock Brent recognized in the prostrate form the Jesuit priest whom he had left at St. Gabriel's but two days since, the same man against whose too constant visits he had found it necessary to caution his sister; and now to meet him *thus!*

He rushed toward the body and knelt beside it. Tearing away cloak and cassock and hair-shirt under all, he leaned his ear above the heart. For a full minute he listened.

"He is dead," he said at last, "and must have been dead for hours."

"You know him?"

"Ay, he is one of the Fathers at St. Inigo's. He was staying with my sister Mary at St. Gabriel's, and probably had started on the journey back to the Hill when this overtook him;" and Brent began rapidly to repeat a prayer for the dead.

Huntoon stood by in silence with bowed head. When Brent had finished Huntoon said, —

"Did he — was death natural?"

Brent shook his head gloomily. "Look," he said; and as Huntoon stooped, he drew aside the shirt and showed a wound on the left side above the fifth rib. The clothing below it was dark and stiff with blood. No words were needed to tell the tale.

"It must have been done by a native," said Huntoon.

"Ay, 't was a deed of revenge or pure malice, — either of a native or, perhaps, of some of the Protestants. To say truth, Father Mohl had many enemies among them. He has been a great stirrer up of dissension 'twixt Catholic and

Protestant, and 't is partly on account of him and his brethren that Leonard Calvert is gone home to consult with Lord Baltimore. Father Mohl had ever a sneering way with him, and to look at him one would say he had taken it with him to the next world."

"Ay, 't is a ghastly smile! Think you could we draw the lips more together and close the eyelids above that horrible stare?"

"You can try. Nay — 't is vain."

"Hulloa! Hulloa! Hulla-ho!"

The distant call brought back the two men for the first time to the thought of their comrades. Huntoon looking round saw that the donkey had entangled his reins in the low branches of a tree near by. As he moved toward it Brent called out, —

"Nay, leave him there! We shall have need of him. Take my horse and go back to the women, and prepare them for what they must see. Mount Mistress Neville on Anne's donkey, then stay you with them and my horse, and send Neale and Cornwaleys back to help me here."

The younger man bowed and turned back as he was bidden. At the joining of the road he saw the four grouped where he had left them, Neale and Cornwaleys talking in low tones, and Peggy feeding nuts to a wild squirrel half tamed by the magic of her voice.

"Come, bunny! bunny! bunny! Here's fresh nuts gathered in the woods this fall. Be not afraid! I'm as harmless as thou. I have no gun and could not fire it if I had. Nay, do not cock thy head and turn thy black eye toward Captain Cornwaleys! He reserves his fire for larger game. Why, he will not even shoot a glance at me, for all I have on my best bib and tucker."

The Captain, who for some time had been chafing under the too pressing demands on his power of listening made by Neale, broke away now and drew near Peggy.

"I am honored that Mistress Neville is willing to share her attention between me and a squirrel, or perhaps, as I seem to have the minor share, I might better say between a squirrel and me."

"That should be set down to my modesty. I felt more equal to the task of amusing a squirrel than Sir Thomas Cornwaleys of Cross Manor."

"And to the same cause, perchance, I am to set down the gracious pleasure wherewith you have received the devotion of that young gallant from Virginia who has walked by your bridle-rein since ever we left St. Mary's."

"'T was the Governor's orders."

"Ay, and no doubt vastly displeasing to your ladyship."

"Oh, I enjoy talking to any one; the one thing

I cannot abide is solitude. Is not that a sign of a vacant mind?"

"Rather, I should say, of a mind filled with some one person —"

"Do I look like a love-sick maid?"

"No, but that condition doth oft lie hid under quips and smiles. A girl will pick up her skirts and go lilting over hill and dale light-hearted, the looker-on would think, as a milk-maid, and all the while some love-sorrow eating into her heart like a canker-worm. Now, a man is not so. He goes about biting his thumb and scowling at every son of Adam that speaks to his sweetheart, and, for the matter of that, often enough scowling at his sweetheart herself, as that callow boy has been doing all day."

"Faith, I gave him cause."

"The more fool he to let you see that your teasing had met with such success. However, I care little how he feels, so long as you are heart-whole; but in the name of all the gallants of Maryland I do protest against seeing Mistress Margaret Neville, on all hands allowed to be the most charming damsel in St. Mary's, carried off by an interloping Virginian. Troth, if the boys don't oust him I 'll enter the lists myself."

"Truly?"

"Try me and see!"

Peggy burst out into a merry ringing laugh,

suddenly interrupted by the sight of Romney Huntoon coming toward them with white, drawn face and set teeth.

The talk and laughter died on the lips of the two who saw him.

"Oh, what is it?" said Peggy, running to meet him. "Sure, something dreadful hath befallen! Governor Brent — is he killed?"

"No, he is well — he sent me hither; but — there has been an accident —"

"Are you hurt, that you look so white?"

"No, no; no one you know is injured — but a stranger, a priest, has been struck with a knife and killed."

It was Peggy's turn to grow pale now. Here she had been laughing and lightly jesting while this tragedy was brushing her so closely with its sable wings.

"Master Neale," Huntoon said, turning to the Councillor, "you and Captain Cornwaleys are to follow this path till you find Governor Brent, and help him to lift the body of the priest to the donkey's back; Mistress Neville, you are to ride before Anne on her donkey here."

"Could I not be of use if I went too to the Governor?"

"Hast thou ever looked on death?"

"Never, to remember it. My mother died when I was a little child and my father at sea."

"Then do not look upon that corpse yonder. I have seen a dead baby and it looked like a waxen lily, and I have seen a man shot by an Indian's arrow and he looked grand and stern like a marble statue, but this priest was ghastly, horrible. No, I am sure the Governor would not wish you to see it. Mount, and we will ride on and prepare the household at St. Gabriel's."

When Romney had left him Giles Brent stooped over the body of the dead priest. "My God!" he murmured, "were not things in this unhappy colony tangled enough without this new trouble? There is a deviltry here that must be sifted to the bottom. We must mark this tree by which the corpse lies. The distance must be two miles from St. Gabriel's and within ten paces of the cross trail from the main path. If there is any clue we must follow it. There should be footsteps; but the fresh snow has covered them whichever way they turned. Death must have been mercifully swift from such a wound."

As if to put an end to these disconnected thoughts, he stooped and turned the body on its side. As he did so, something fell from the folds of the cloak. Giles Brent looked at it, studied it more closely with a gaze of fixed amazement, and then as he heard the sound of approaching footsteps slipped it into his pocket.

But his face was ashen as he spoke to Neale, who was in advance.

"Come, Neale, do you lift on that side and I on this, while Cornwaleys may bind him to the saddle with the rope he will find in my saddle-bag. So — gently there — now steady him! Cornwaleys, take the bridle and lead on gently. Thank Heaven, the distance is short!"

"Hast thou — is there any clue?" asked Neale.

"Nay, who shall say what is a clue? Heaven forbid I should even in thought accuse an innocent man, but as God is my judge, if the guilt be proven the murderer shall be punished, ay, though he were mine own brother."

Slowly the men set forward, — Neale and Cornwaleys supporting their terrible burden between them, Brent walking behind with his horse's bridle-rein over his arm, and his head bowed as if with a burden too heavy to be borne.

"Who could have thought it?" he murmured. "Who could have believed it of *him* of all men?"

Raising his eyes, he caught sight of the little party in advance, Peggy in her scarlet cloak and Romney by her side. The sight seemed to give rise to new and still more painful reflections.

"Poor child," he thought, "would it were possible to punish the guilty without bringing down shame and sorrow on the innocent as well!"

On and on the caravan moved till the last bend in the road was reached, and there, beyond the clearing, lay the manor house of St. Gabriel's.

The sun was setting behind the hills and touching the white tips of the snow-covered trees with flame. The smoke curled from the kitchen chimney and the fire on the hearth of the hall shone out merrily to greet the travellers.

Giles Brent was expected, and he rarely came alone. His sister Mary, who had all day been regretting that he could not be present at the investiture of Elinor's tenant, was resolved that a noble supper should console him for the loss. Venison pasty flanked by game graced the head and foot of the table, and hot bowls of soup simmered before the kitchen fire.

Cecil was stationed at the window to keep watch and bring early report of the approach of the cloaked rider on his black Flemish horse.

Already they had been seen, for Cecil and Knut were tearing across the snowy fields, and Mary Brent and Elinor were at the door with two men by their side. Brent's heart rose in his throat and choked him as he recognized Christopher Neville waving his hand in joyous welcome.

Oh, treachery! And who was that beside him — Ralph Ingle? Well, he might be of use. 'T was as well that he had come. Ah, now Peggy

had reached the door. She was telling the story. Brent's eye never moved from Christopher's face while it went on, and he noted with grim satisfaction that at least the man had the grace to shudder and turn pale. But what was this?—instead of hiding himself as he should from the gaze of honest men, he was coming forward toward him, toward *it!*

"This is a sad business, Brent!"

"*Sad* is not the word; 't is a *shameful* business."

"Ay, full of shame for the doer, and sadness for the rest of us. Can I help in lifting the body?"

"Nay, that is for those to do who, if they loved him not, yet bore him no malice."

Neville started. How could Brent have heard of the quarrel when he was absent?

"Not only am I one of those, but I sought this priest last night to beg his pardon."

"Hush!" said Brent, hoarsely, "incriminate thyself no further!"

"INCRIMINATE!"—That one word cast a lurid light upon the situation. In an instant Neville saw the pitfalls around his path, and the habit of facing danger had taught him the habit of self-control.

"This," he said, looking Brent full in the face, "is neither the time nor the place for the discussion of your words and all that they do

imply. I shall hold myself ready to meet you when and where you will, to answer any and all charges, whether they come from friend or foe."

As Neville turned on his heel he was aware for the first time that Ralph Ingle had been standing close beside him, and of necessity overhearing all that was said. He in turn could not fail to catch Ingle's words addressed to Brent:

"Surely, this judgment is over hasty. I have known Sir Christopher but one day, yet am I loath —"

"Thou loath! and pray what dost think of me? Why, I had torn my heart out rather than believe such a thing of my friend; but justice is justice."

"Yet mercy is mercy."

"Ay, but mercy to one is injustice to another. And this deed is so dastardly it puts the doer beyond the pale of clemency."

"And who is the doer of the deed?" It was Mistress Calvert's voice that spoke, and both men started.

Elinor Calvert stood there before them in her dress of white and gold. She who had come lightly walking across the snow-covered fields, holding her head high and bidding her heart not to beat too joyously, seemed now like some animal decked for the sacrifice, that has been

allowed to make merry on the journey to the altar, but now must bare its breast to the sacrificial knife.

"Who is the doer of the deed?" Even as she put the question she knew the answer, yet she stood her ground and gazed steadfastly at the men, whose eyes fell before hers.

Ralph Ingle looked at the earth and began to stir with his foot a brown branch of ground-pine which had pushed its way through the snow.

Brent stroked the donkey's ears for an instant, swallowed hard, hesitated, then spoke impulsively, "Elinor, there is no use in attempting to hide it. The man who did that foul murder is *Christopher Neville*."

"NEVER!"

"Ay, so I would have sworn two hours since; but tell me one thing — did he and the priest quarrel here at St. Gabriel's last night?"

"Ay — but — "

"Nay, no buts — plain facts tell their own story with no 'buts.' Did he or did he not start out into the night after the quarrel with Father Mohl?"

Elinor quivered as though the knife had entered her own heart.

"Oh, I will not answer! How can I when I know every word will be twisted to one fell purpose?"

"Elinor, what is it to thee what befalls a man whom thou didst meet but yesterday?"

"That is false. I knew him years ago in England. Years ago he loved me and I loved him, and we would have wedded but for —"

"But for what, Elinor?"

"For his faith."

"Ah, thou hast said the word. Now we have the thread to guide us through this dark maze. Neville loves thee still. He follows thee to this country, he begs me to intercede with thee to accept him as thy tenant, and all without a word of having known thee before; not a word, you see, Ingle, even to me, this woman's natural guardian. Doth it not smack of deceit and treachery?"

"I cannot deny it hath that appearance, yet beware how you do wholly commit yourself to appearances!"

"Ay, if appearances were all, but listen how the story all fits together. Faith, I can tell it as though I had seen all. This man comes to St. Gabriel's, and finding Mistress Calvert alone he tells her of his love. She, like the good Catholic she is, tells him in turn that his faith still stands between them. He swears at the fanatical priests who stand between her and him. Is not this all true so far, Cousin?"

No response; but the silence answers him.

"Next comes a quarrel 'twixt Neville and Father

Mohl, how bred I cannot say, though doubtless this lady could tell us if she would; but, by my guess, at her behest her lover follows the priest to ask pardon; then — then — the rest is known to God only, but the result we see lying before us in mute and ghastly protest at the wrong done to humanity."

"Shame, Cousin Giles, that you are so ready to think evil of your friend! What is all this tale of thine when sifted? A tissue of what was, and what might have been. You have shown a possible motive, but 't is a far cry from that to proving the deed."

And what say you, then, to this? As he spoke, Brent drew from his pocket a poniard, with a handle curiously inlaid with silver and ivory, and cut upon it the initial "*N*" sunk in a deep circle.

Elinor's only answer was a deep groan. Drawing her cloak close round her, she turned and fled toward the house, her head bowed like some wild creature that had got its death-wound.

CHAPTER IX

MIDNIGHT MASS

MIDNIGHT at St. Gabriel's. In the little chapel at the end of the hall stood a rude bier, and on it lay the figure of Father Mohl, his hands crossed upon his breast. Near the bier knelt Elinor Calvert, telling her beads, but absently, as though her thoughts were far away, and on her face such a look of utter and unspeakable grief as would have melted a heart of stone. Her golden hair was drawn back from her pale forehead, and her lashes fell over deep shadowy circles which sorrow had traced on her cheek. Grief's pencil works swiftly.

Gusts of night wind swept along the uncarpeted floor in little eddies, and stirred the heavy folds of her black dress.

Not far from her knelt Peggy Neville, miserably ill at ease in a ceremonial unfamiliar and unsympathetic. She was too young to throw herself into the spirit of other people's emotions, and found comfort only in the society of those who threw themselves into hers. In spite of her

awe in the presence of death, her thoughts would wander ever and anon to the scenes in the forest, to Romney's words, and, shame upon her! she could not for her life help wondering if he were looking at her now, and if her feet showed beneath her dress as she knelt. And all the while the young man saw her as a vision of a saint kneeling in the depth of the shadows.

From the altar sounded Father White's voice in the solemn rhythmic cadences of the mass, and the voices below answered in their tremulous responses, —

Dominus vobiscum —

Et cum spiritu tuo.

Benedicamus Domine!

Deo gratias.

Fidelium animæ per misericordiam Dei, requiescant in pace.

Amen.

As the candle-light shone on Mary Brent's face, it marked a curious change wrought by these few hours. The placidity had stiffened into obstinacy, as a water-drop stiffens into an icicle. The nostrils were slightly pinched, and the lines which bigotry draws around the mouth were already defining themselves in dim outline. No one can determine to believe evil of another without planting in his own soul the seeds of deterioration. Mary Brent had no sooner said in her

heart, "Christopher Neville is a murderer," than she began to desire his punishment, and having banished him from the circle of her sympathy, she was fain to justify herself by seeking, and secretly wishing proof of his guilt. From this, it was but a step to suspicion of all his acts; and after that came uncharitableness, and hatred cloaking itself under love of justice and pious devotion to holy Church, which had been thus outraged in the person of its priest.

Already the dark deed enacted in the forest was working, not only on the lives, but on the character of those among whom it had fallen.

The men and women here at St. Gabriel's were being tried in the crucible of destiny, and none could foresee which should emerge pure gold, and which should be utterly consumed in the fire.

Still the priest's voice sounded from the altar, and the responsive chant rose and fell on the still air.

An awe such as had never before touched her young life stole over Peggy Neville as she listened, and crowded out the petty vanities which had filled her mind at first. As she looked at the bier and the priest's body stretched upon it, she seemed to see her own future strangely intertwined by destiny with the fate of this rigid figure. How still it lay! Oh, if it would only

move! The mass came to an end. Dead silence fell, and lasted. Peggy felt that she could bear it no longer. She must cry out, scream, or perhaps by one of those strange, contradictory emotions which assail the human soul at great crises, laugh aloud with wild, unreal hilarity. At this instant she felt a touch upon her shoulder, and her brother's voice said in her ear, "Get thy cloak and hood and meet me outside the door."

His voice sounded grave and ominous.

With beating heart she stole away from the circle already breaking up into whispering groups, and, having donned her cloak with the scarlet berries still clinging to its breast, she made her way out at a side door, and walked hurriedly down the path till she saw her brother waiting for her beneath the shadow of the snow-laden trees.

At sight of him her tense mood broke suddenly, and bursting into tears, she threw herself into his arms.

"Oh, Kit! Kit! Tell me about it! Who is he? What is he to us? Why dost thou look so white and strange?"

Christopher Neville swallowed hard, and moved his lips without utterance.

"My heart is troubled," he said, speaking to himself rather than Peggy, and then fell to repeating the words of the psalm: "My friends

and my neighbors have drawn near and stood against me. And they that were near me stood afar off."

With round eyes Peggy watched him sadly, sure that he was in a fever, and wishing she had brought her aunt's medicaments of herbs and sweet waters from St. Mary's. "Come, Christopher," she said gently, "come into the house. There is naught amiss — thou art walking under the shadow of a bad dream."

For an instant he faced her in silence. Then at last his words came out, swift and compelled as if shot from a cannon.

"Little sister," he said, "a sudden trouble has fallen on my life, and almost the saddest part of it is that it is like to darken thine too. I would to God," he cried with sudden bitterness, "I had never brought thee over seas."

"Am I in thy way?"

"No! no! — rather art thou the only comfort I have to turn to."

"Then," said Peggy with the characteristic stamp of her foot, "then why say such hard things? I am not very old and I am not very wise; but I think — I hope — I can be trusted, and I know I love thee dearly, and would lay down my life to serve thee."

"Faithful little heart!" he murmured.

"But tell me," she said, speaking softly, as one

does to those in trouble, — "tell me what is this dark cloud which has fallen upon thee since thou didst come all smiles to lift me from my saddle this very day. Surely thou didst know of nothing then."

"No, a few short hours since I would have refused to change my lot with any man in the province, — a few short hours, yet they may suffice to blight a life."

"For the love of God, talk no more in riddles, but tell me plainly, what is it has changed thee so? Cheer up, dear heart, and do not talk as if thou didst stand accused of some terrible crime!"

"*I do.*"

"For shame! 't is no time for idle jesting."

"Never were words spoke less in lightness. If thou must have plainer speech, know that I, Christopher Neville, thy brother, stand accused of murdering yonder priest."

"What fools utter such imbecile slander?"

"Alas, they are no fools that utter, ay, and believe it."

"Why not go straight to Governor Brent and give them the lie?"

Neville staggered as if a blow had struck him.

"Peggy —"

"Brother —"

"*It is Brent who accuses me!*"

At these words Peggy turned pale, but she

never flinched. "Some villain has his ear," she cried. "Tell me who it is; I will face him down, — yes, I, girl though I am, will show him what it is to lie away the character, perhaps the life, of the best man in Maryland."

"How do you know it is a lie?"

Peggy Neville laughed — a nervous, hysterical laugh; but the sound was music in her brother's ears. There was one person, then, to whom the idea of his being a murderer was impossible — absurd. He smiled, but he repeated the question; "How dost thou know it is a lie?"

"I know it as I know that water runs downhill, that fire burns. Shall I swear by these and doubt the laws that rule a soul?"

Neville looked at his sister in a sort of trance of bewilderment. Could this be the little girl he had played with and laughed at and teased and loved as one loves a pet and plaything, — this pale young creature, with eyes aflame with righteous wrath, with pity on her lips, and all her heart bursting with sympathy and tenderness? Her brother took her hand in his with a feeling akin to reverence.

"You will never know how much you have comforted me," he said. "I did not do it, Peggy. I did not do it. Cherish that certainty as a support in the hard, dark days thou wilt be called to pass through."

"Waste no time in telling me what I know already as well as thou. Let us take counsel rather, while we may. Tell me first what do they say? What reason have they? What have they found, seen, imagined?"

"Not much, but enough; they know that I followed Father Mohl out into the night — that he was never seen after till he was found dead in the wood yonder."

"But how couldst thou have joined in a death struggle and brought home no trace of conflict?"

"When I came back I was torn with brambles and stained with blood — of a beast, I told them — but who could know if I spoke truth?"

It was characteristic of Neville to see his adversary's case more strongly than his own.

"This is all but a series of happenings. Any one might have met with the same disaster, and come to his death by an arrow from the bow of one of the natives."

"It was no arrow that did the deed. It was a knife — an English knife."

"Oh, I am so glad! now surely they can trace the murderer."

Neville gave a deep groan, and leaned his head upon his arm against the tree.

"*Peggy, the knife was mine.*"

"Thine!"

"Ay; Governor Brent found it hid in the

folds of the priest's cloak. He knew it for mine. Canst thou wonder that he accuses me?"

"Does — does any one else suspect thee?"

Neville said nothing, yet his sister was answered.

"Oh, cruel! cruel!" she cried. "How could she know thee so long, and credit any such base slander? She is a —"

"Hush! Not a word of her. Whatever she does, says, thinks, is right and forever beyond cavil."

"Monstrous!" groaned his sister, "the man is so daft that if this woman tells him he has committed murder he will bow his head in meek assent. Oh, be a man, be a man, I pray thee, and give her back scorn for scorn!"

"She has shown me no scorn, — only a sad, half-sick listlessness, as though she too had got a death-wound at my hands. It is that which has cut me to the heart as no pride or wrath or disdain had had power to do."

Peggy shivered. Her brother noticed it. "What a brute I am," he murmured, "to keep thee standing here in the cold night air. 'T is of a piece with my selfishness. Get thee in and know that thou hast brought something like comfort to the heart of a sorrow-stricken man. Good-night, and God bless thee!"

"I will go in as thou bidst me, for the night

air waxes cold. But thou — what wilt thou do?"

"I do not know; I have not thought. It matters little."

"Oh, yes, it matters very little whether thou dost catch thy death of cold!"

"Would to God I could!"

"Well, as for that, it might serve thy turn, but it would be passing hard for me!" Here she began to cry.

"By Heavens, thou dost speak truth! Listen, little one: for thy sake I will take care of myself; for thy sake I will fight this thing to the bitter end. And if by any chance I conquer, thou mayst have the joy of knowing that but for thee it never had been done."

For the first time a ring of determination, of energy, of unconscious hope sounded in his voice.

"Now art thou brave once more," cried Peggy, raising herself on tip-toe to look into his eyes, which shone like cut steel in the moonlight. "Never fear but all shall come right yet!"

As she tore herself away and hurried up the steps, she saw with amazement that Ralph Ingle was pacing up and down the cleared space before the door of the manor-house.

Stranger still, he carried a gun.

He saluted gravely as Peggy drew near, and

would fain have passed on, but she stopped before him.

"Wherefore abroad so late?" she asked.

"By order of Governor Brent," he answered.

The words struck a chill to her soul. So Christopher, her brother Christopher, the idol of her childhood, the revered hero of her girlish dreams, was being *watched*, like a criminal! A quick flame of rage rose in her heart, and drove back the numbness of despair. "How dare they?" she whispered to herself; but she hid her thoughts, and spoke no word further.

As she passed through the hall to reach her chamber, she saw Elinor still kneeling in the chapel, and the hot anger rose in her stronger than ever. Was this the pattern of perfection she had wasted so many thoughts upon, — this woman whose faith broke at the first trial?

Oh, paltry faith! Oh, travesty on confidence!

At the foot of the stair Giles Brent and his sister Margaret stood in low-toned conversation. As Peggy drew near, Giles started and moved aside a little, but Margaret stretched out a warm, comforting hand.

"Oh, thank you, thank you!" sobbed Peggy, as breaking away she rushed up stairs.

"Poor child, she hath a heavy load to bear!" said Brent, looking after her.

"Giles, thou art a fool!"

A moment ago Brent had been ready to take his sister into his confidence; but her frank speech angered him. Her great mistake lay in answering appeals for sympathy with advice.

"Margaret, thou art too prone to think that wisdom will die with thee. It is time thou didst take to heart the fact that I am Governor of this province, and responsible to God and Calvert alone for my ruling."

"The more the pity that so great a trust is fallen to so little sense."

"Thou hast a shrewd tongue, Margaret, and I have felt its lash often; but I think thou mightst spare it to-night. Surely, I have enough to try me."

"Ay, without conjuring up new troubles of thine own imagining."

"'T is easy said, but hath little meaning. Is the murder of yonder priest of my own imagining?"

"No."

"Is Neville's knife falling from his garments my own imagining?"

"No."

"Then where comes in the point of thy words?"

"I mean that thou hast walked as fast to meet this trouble as thou shouldst have walked away from it. Was any with thee when thou didst find the knife?"

"No, 't was between the going of Huntoon and the coming of the others."

"And didst show it to Neale or Cornwaleys?"

"No — I was half stunned and walked on in silence; but when Neville came to meet me I was maddened by his impudent boldness, and I charged him with the crime then and there."

"Were you two alone?"

"Ay, but for Ralph Ingle and Elinor."

"But for them! As well tell a secret to two hundred as to two. No flies get through a shut door; but once open, it may as well be kept so, and let them in and out at will. Therefore, as I said at the beginning, thou art a fool."

"Thinkst thou I would defeat justice, and make myself sharer in such a guilty secret as that?"

"I think thou art first of all Governor of this province, wherein the chief danger lies in the hatred that Catholic and Protestant have for each other. Now, once 't is known, — nay, suspected, since for my single self I believe it not, though I own the proof is strong, — but once, as I say, let it be suspected that a Protestant hath murdered a Catholic, and then all the dogs of war are loosed at once. How can it be that thou who hadst the wit to deal with Ingle shouldst so have lost thy head here?"

Brent was irritated by the explicitness of his

sister's explanation, as a deaf person is irritated by a tone a shade louder than necessary. Really, he could take in her meaning without having it lined out to him as if he were a schoolboy.

"Margaret, I have heard thee through because thou art my sister, and because thou hast in times past been a faithful counsellor; but in this I will be my own master, and I am in no humor to submit to orders from thee. Therefore say no more."

"So be it, then, Brother! Thy folly be on thine own head; but bear in mind that folly oft-times claims a more usurious interest than sin. I go back to Kent Fort at daylight, and shall do my best to quell the rising discontent; but I know not what will follow the news of the arrest of a Protestant, especially of such a Protestant, — a man like Christopher Neville, loved and trusted of all men."

"There, Margaret, thou hast turned the knife in the wound as thou hast a trick of doing. This is the very root of bitterness in my heart. I too loved and trusted this man, and he hath betrayed me. He deceived me about Elinor, whom it seems he hath known and loved for years back. He deceived me about his wealth, letting me believe he had need to work at Cecil Point, when in truth he has lands of value in England. And now worst of all he has betrayed my hospitality by this unpardonable villainy."

"Enough of this, Giles! It is useless for thee and me to argue this matter, wherein we cannot see alike. Only do not thou deceive thyself with talk of statecraft or public duty; these may be in thy mind, but there is somewhat under them, — thou art jealous —"

Giles Brent started as if a lash had struck him.

"*I* — jealous!"

"Yes, Giles, the love of long ago still lives in thy memory."

"And what harm if it do?"

"No harm save as it drives thee to injustice. Beware! and trust not thy judgment when thy heart holds the balance."

"Good-night!" said Giles Brent, and turned upon his heel.

CHAPTER X

THE ORDEAL BY TOUCH

THE second day after the murder had come, and still Father Mohl's body lay in the centre of the great hall, the inscrutable smile still on his lips, the fringe of hair streaked over the high, pale forehead. The candles at his head and feet guttered and dripped in their sockets and opposed their yellow flame to the grayness of the January day which seemed to be peering in curiously at the scene in the hall, where all the household of St. Gabriel's were gathered to watch the final test of Christopher Neville's guilt or innocence.

The dwellers by Chesapeake Bay two hundred and fifty years ago had not banished the influence of the supernatural from the conduct of life in public or private affairs. If their easy toleration prevented their taking satisfaction in the witch-burning practised by their contemporaries in Massachusetts, they yet found nothing incredible in witchcraft, for they too saw ghosts and felt the malign influence of the evil eye.

To such a generation it was quite natural that a murderer should be arraigned before the dead as well as the living.

> "If the vile actors of the heinous deed
> Near the dead body happily be brought,
> Oft hath 't been proved the breathless corpse will bleed."

It was a test based half on superstition, half on deep knowledge of human nature; for how indeed could a murderer, brought face to face with the still accusation in his victim's rigid form, fail to betray himself before the hostile or coldly neutral eyes of the witnesses. And as for the corpse showing signs of recognition of the assassin, why, there were so many ready to swear that they had known that to happen that it would have been flat scepticism to doubt it.

So the household of St. Gabriel's waited for Neville and his guard to enter the room, a deep silence hanging over all.

Giles Brent, from his end of the long table, sat gazing at his sister, and thinking how strangely her smooth, round face and domestic bearing contrasted with the grim scene around her. It was as if some brown thrush had been caught up from its nest in the bushes by the wind of destiny, and suddenly enveloped in the black cloud of a tornado.

Mary Brent kept her eyes steadily fixed upon

the portrait of Lord Baltimore, painted by Van Dyck, and hanging on the wall on the turn of the stairs.

She studied every detail of his costume, — the small clothes of blue velvet, coat embroidered in gold, and doublet embroidered in silver, the open sleeves with their azure lining, the breastplate of blue inlaid with gold, and the sword-hilt studded with jewels, the powdered wig that topped the whole, and the cocked hat, its flap looped and held back with brilliants, which shone bright as real gems.

These seemed real while the figures around her receded from her sight dim and blurred, wavering like figures in a dream. There was Mistress Calvert on the settle below the bend of the stairs. Was she really Elinor Calvert, or a corpse like the one which lay scarcely more white in the middle of the room?

Elinor herself was almost as doubtful as her cousin whether she really lived and breathed. It seemed rather as though she had already tasted the bitterness of death, and now moved about, a pale, miserable ghost in a land where all was ghastly and miserable. Even Cecil seemed unreal, and that worried her more than all the rest. In the last three days the touch of those little arms had in some way lost its power to comfort, and the childish presence had grown irksome

because it forbade her giving way to the bursts of wild weeping which had alternated with stony despair.

Just now Cecil was pressing close to her side and whispering in her ear, —

"Mamma, did Thir Chrithtopher Neville kill the priest? Dost thou think he did it?"

"Hush, Cecil!"

"But did he?"

"I know not."

"Father White thinks he did it."

Silence on Elinor's part.

"And Couthin Giles thinks so."

Still silence.

"And Couthin Mary thinks so; but I do not."

"And why?"

"Because he promised me a bow and arrowth and he knew thou wouldst not let me take a gift from a murderer."

The quick stab of the word was intolerable. Elinor thrust the child away from her side with a swift, tragic gesture; then, at sight of the angry flush in his cheeks and the grieved wonder in his eyes, she caught him to her heart again close, and bowed her head over his curls.

The only person who caught the meaning of the action was Peggy Neville, who sat in a corner a little back of the Governor's chair. Heart

reads heart in crises like these, and sympathy is second sight. Her first feeling was a quick thrill and a desire to run across the room and kiss that cold proud face with the swollen eyelids. Then the blood of the Nevilles, proud every whit as that of the Calverts, surged angrily back to her heart. "She to dare to doubt him! Why, nobody thinks great things of me, but I would never desert any one that I cared even the least little bit about. I 'd stick all the closer when people turned against him, and as for evidence, what is the use of being a woman if you are going to be influenced by such things as that!"

Oh, little Peggy! women do not own the only minds superior to evidence. From across the hall a young man is watching every expression of your face, feeling sure that your brother is innocent because you think him so — confident that Governor Brent is a cold, hard man, eager to believe evil of a friend, and vowing that as for him, Romney Huntoon, his sword, his honor, his life itself are at the service of Christopher Neville, with whom he has scarcely spoken, and of Christopher's sister Peggy whom he has known for a matter of ten days.

A silence deeper than before falls on the company as the tramp of feet is heard at the door and Neville enters between two guards. The

Coroner's inquest is formed after the fashion of the day. Giles Brent as Chief-Justice and Chief Coroner of the province, under that charter which in Maryland invested the governor with the *regia potestas*, on the platform at the end of the hall.

Associated with him by courtesy is the lady of the manor, while on either side are ranged Councillors Neale and Cornwaleys. All face the central figure stretched rigid on the bier in the middle of the hall, and as the prisoner walks the length of the room that lies between him and the bier, all eyes are fixed upon him. To each person present his bearing denotes a different thing. It is not beauty alone that is in the eye of the gazer.

To Peggy Neville that bearing speaks lofty consciousness of innocence.

To Mary Brent it swaggers with the effrontery of brazen guilt.

To Giles Brent the face is an impenetrable mask.

To Elinor Calvert — but how describe the emotions that surge through her soul, each obliterating the former like waves on a beach of sand!

Her first feeling, as she watched Neville stride up the room, was a thrill of pride in his imperious personality as he towered taller by a head than his

guard, and in his bearing outranking all present in courtliness.

Then came a longing to speak out before them all and claim him for her true love; then, as her glance travelled upward to that pale set face, the deadly chill of doubt and distrust struck cold upon her heart, and she bowed her head upon her hands.

When she awoke to consciousness of what was passing around she heard the voice of Giles Brent saying, —

"That all here present may understand the business which is going forward, let me first set forth my duties under the law. 'A coroner of our lord the King,' says the statute, 'shall go to the places where any be slain, and shall summon the honest men of the neighborhood, and of them shall inquire what they know touching the death; and if any person is said to be guilty of the murder he shall be brought before the coroner and his inquest, and shall be put upon his defence that he may, if he can, purge himself of the charge.'"

"Oh, dear, how Giles doth love form! I believe he would see us all hung if he might pronounce sentence in Latin." Elinor's foot kept time to her angry thoughts, and that so loud that it caught Brent's ear and brought a frown to his brow.

"Christopher Neville, you stand accused of a dastardly crime, — the murder of Andrew Mohl, a priest of the Jesuit order, who lies here before us, and who is known to have come to his death on the night of January twentieth."

"Who are mine accusers?"

Brent turned and whispered first to Neale and Cornwaleys, then to his sister, and finally, turning again toward the prisoner, he said, —

"'T will serve no good turn to press that question."

"I stand upon my rights."

"Is it not enough that there be a dozen here who are convinced of thy guilt?"

"I stand upon my rights. I will have the name."

"Then, since thou dost demand the name of him who lodged the charge, 't is that of Father Fisher, come hither to-day from St. Mary's."

"Father Fisher? The head of the Jesuit colony at St. Inigo's?"

"Ay; yet he makes his charge not as a priest, but a citizen."

"No doubt."

"Sneers, sir, will not help your case, with which we will now go on. What plea are you fain to enter, 'guilty' or 'not guilty'?"

"Not guilty."

"Master Neale, kindly act as secretary and record the plea. Sir Christopher, will you hear the evidence against you?"

"I will."

"On any disputed point you shall confront witnesses; but that we may not waste time, let us settle first that whereon we agree. First, you are a Protestant."

Neville bowed assent.

"Second, here in this house you did quarrel with the dead priest touching matters of faith and doctrine."

"We had words, certainly."

"And angry words, as I am told."

"I was angry. Belike he was angry, too."

"He admits that he was angered. Put that down," whispered Mary Brent to Neale.

"Tell us what happened after your talk with Father Mohl."

"He rose and started to walk to St. Mary's."

"And what did you then?"

"I followed him."

"For what purpose?"

"To beg his pardon."

"Ah! Now we have it. You felt you had done him wrong."

"I did not."

"Then why ask his pardon?"

"Because I had wounded other hearts than his,

and, moreover, I had offended against Mistress Brent's hospitality."

Mary Brent's lips drew themselves into a tight, straight line.

"Now, Sir Christopher, will you tell the court something we are most urgent to know, — did you, or did you not, return from that search agitated and distraught in bearing, with garments torn and stained with blood?"

"I did."

There was an ominous pause, during which one could well nigh count heart-beats.

"Christopher Neville, do you know this knife?"

"Yea; 't is mine own."

"Ay, and found in the folds of the priest's garments, and fitting with fatal exactness the wound in the breast. Now, one more question: when you came in that night did you, or did you not, crave blessing and absolution from Father White?"

"No — not absolution!"

"A mere quibble! You confessed to him that you had sinned, and you begged his blessing. Not one of these points do you deny; and, indeed, denial were worse than useless, for, as you well know, I have witnesses enough at hand to prove them all. The explanations in your written statement, which lies before me and which I have

examined, your silly tales of the wild animal, the brush and briar, do credit neither to your mind nor your conscience. Rather I beg of you while there is yet time make a clean breast of it here before God, before me, and before this assembled household of St. Gabriel's." Here Brent's voice took a tone almost of pleading, strangely at variance with his magisterial manner at the beginning.

"We all know," he went on, "that the priest had the cause of the Church so much at heart that he might have been tempted to use words to a heretic hard for hot blood to brook. Tell us all that happened, and there may be circumstances making for leniency if not for justification."

"I did not kill the priest."

The dulness of the speaker's tone might be the result of the reaction from strong excitement, or the apathy of guilt. It angered Brent.

"Neville, I would like to stand your friend; but the Governor of the Palatinate of Maryland declines to be a compounder of felony. I ask once more, have you any confession to make?"

"None."

"Gentlemen, are you ready for the test?"

Councillor Neale and Cornwaleys bowed assent.

"Mistress Brent, do you, as lady of the manor, approve the aforesaid test that Christopher Neville be commanded to lay his hand upon the breast of Father Mohl yonder and take oath be-

fore God that he knoweth naught of how the dead man came by his death?"

"I approve it," said Mary Brent, rising in her place, "and I do command all those here present to draw near the bier and keep watch upon the face of the dead while the oath proceeds."

Slowly and solemnly the assembled household drew together in a circle about the corpse. Neville placed his right hand upon the breast of the dead man. For an instant he stood silent so, then raising the hand to heaven he said slowly, calmly, distinctly: "I swear to God I am innocent of this man's death, and I know naught touching it."

Why did all present suddenly shrink back as if a leper stood among them? The dead priest lay rigid as ever, the folded hands had not stirred, the inscrutable smile had not wavered on the lips or given any hint of its meaning. Surely there was no accusation in those still eyelids. Neville himself looked round in some bewilderment, till he caught his sister's murmur of horror, —

"Kit! oh, Kit!—YOUR HAND!"

Yes, as he turned it he saw for himself, a drop or two of blood trickling from a tiny wound in the palm, made by a rough place on the crucifix as he drew his hand from the corpse. A scratch so slight that it yielded no sensation to one in his tense, nervous state.

"Ay," he said coolly, but bitterly enough, "that ends it, I reckon. Such testimony as that closes the case against me; yet, before God —"

"Hush! no more blasphemy!" It was Giles Brent's voice that spoke, and all echo of friendliness was gone out of it. "Guards, remove your prisoner to the tobacco-house and keep him close. Gentlemen, the inquest is ended."

CHAPTER XI

THE GREATER LOVE

THE guards turned, one holding Neville by the wrist, the other marching behind, and thus he walked down the hall between the rows of unfriendly faces. As he passed Elinor she looked up timidly, but met a glance of freezing contempt.

So she read the language of his eyes, and he knew not that they spoke any such thing. Instead he had but a vague consciousness that among the dull ranks of meaningless faces his eyes suddenly fell upon a glory, a brilliancy of sunny tresses straying over cheeks of a luminous pallor.

That was Elinor Calvert. Oh, yes! he knew that very well. Who else had that bearing, with its strange blending of a dignity too unconscious to be majestic, with a simplicity too dignified to be wholly simple? And those purple eyes, why were they so sad? Ah, because he was guilty. He had forgotten that; but Giles Brent had said so, and all these hostile faces confirmed

the verdict. At any rate, since she thought so, it mattered little whether the verdict were true or false.

Suddenly there came to him a vision of a new circle in the Inferno, a circle where one forever questioned the eyes he loved and dared not read the answer written therein.

"My son, harden not thine heart; but rather submit thyself in penitence and humility to the sentence of justice."

It was Father White who spoke. The words brought Neville back to the present with a shock. He shook off the kind priest's hand rudely.

"Judgment, not justice!" he answered, with haughtiness, and moved on with a smile on his face. Pride is the fox that the Spartan carries under his cloak, smiling while it eats his heart.

Father White drew back, but so full was Neville's mind that he noted not the movement, nor indeed aught else, till he was aware of a yellow head at his elbow and a pair of short legs striding to keep the pace with his own long ones.

Cecil had crept from his mother's side, and joining Neville was now seeking to slip his little hand into the close-clenched one beside him.

"I 've brought thomething for you," he whispered, putting his other hand to the breast of his jerkin as they came to the door.

Neville answered by a dreary smile.

"It 's a knife to take the place of the one you lost."

The guard shook his head reprovingly.

"No knives for prisoners, Cecil," said Neville.

"Well, you shall have thomething, because you are my friend. I mean that you shall be my tenant at Robin Hood's Barn yet, and I don't think you killed the priest. Mother does; but men must think for themselves."

Neville bit his lip till the blood came.

"See," said Cecil, "here is a picture of Mother done on ivory. She gave it to me the morning I was lord of the manor. I asked if I could give it to you. She smiled and said it would be time enough to think of that when you asked for it, and I promised never to offer it to you till you did; but it ith a pretty picture, and you would like it to look at in the tobacco-house, and you could sell it for bread if you escape" — this in a lower whisper. "Now, do you ask for it?"

Neville grew white to the lips. He looked at the picture as a starving man looks at bread. After an instant's hesitation he shut his teeth and drew himself up.

"*No!*" he cried.

Then wrenching his wrist from the jailer's clasp, he lifted Cecil in his arms, kissed him, and set him down again.

"But I do thank thee from the bottom of a sad heart," he said, and added, "God bless thee and reward thee!"

Inside the hall, with the dignity and formality of which neither fewness of numbers nor bareness of surroundings could rob our forefathers, the court filed down the room, Mistress Brent on her brother's arm.

"Now, Giles," said his sister, "art thou satisfied at last who is the guilty man?"

"I fear there can be no doubt."

"I should say not, indeed. Even Margaret must needs give over her hot defence and admit that the voice of the Lord hath spoken."

"I wish it would tell me what were good to do."

"It does, Giles. It says, 'Be firm! Let not ill-timed tenderness protect the criminal! Blood guiltiness must be wiped out in blood.'"

"That is not a gospel of love, Mary."

"'T is the gospel of justice. I feel a sense of guilt in myself that Holy Church hath suffered such outrage in the bosom of my household, and this guilt can only be purged away when we withdraw fellowship and sympathy from the evil-doer and deliver him up to justice. To-morrow, Giles, thou must go to St. Mary's and —"

"Softly, Mary! In this matter we must move slowly and with caution."

"Thy friendship for this man makes thee weak."

"Come, come, Mary!" said her brother, testily; "'t is time we discovered whether this province is to be ruled by men or women. Elinor calls me hard of heart for persecuting Christopher Neville; Margaret calls me a fool for suspecting him; now you will have me a weakling for not hanging him out of hand. I tell thee I will have no more meddling in this case; when I see my duty clear before me, I will do it. Till then I bid thee hold thy peace."

Brent's last words were overheard by the worthy Masters Neale and Cornwaleys, who followed close after them.

"The Governor is nigh distraught over this wretched business," said Neale, meditatively stroking the tuft on his chin.

"And well he may be," replied Cornwaleys. "It needs but a small torch to light such a flame of religious dissension here in Maryland as a century shall not suffice to extinguish."

"Yet you would not have the guilty escape?"

"Why not Neville as well as Ingle? Better that than set the province afire. Besides, so many innocent must needs suffer with the guilty. Look at that little sister of Neville's! Yesterday she was gay as a lark; to-day she can scarce lift her swollen eyelids. Poor child! I would I could help her."

Another man in the hall shared the wish of Captain Cornwaleys. As Peggy passed Huntoon she felt her hand grasped, and held in a strong, heartening clasp. "Courage!" Romney whispered. "We are not yet at the end. Much may still come to pass in our favor." Peggy's heart rose at the word "*our*."

"But the blood," she murmured. "I believe it was the priest's revenge for the quarrel he had with Kit." The girl shared the superstition of the age, and it seemed to her that some supernatural and malign agency was working against Christopher.

"Nay," answered Romney, "else how account for this?" and he held up his own hand scarred from joint to the joining of the wrist. "'T was from the same edge of the crucifix I got the scratch as I watched by the corpse last night, and leaned over to set the candles at the head straighter in their sockets. No, no, Peggy! it will not do to lose heart now. We must think of nothing but how we can help your brother, — clear him if we can; save him if we cannot clear him."

The contagion of hopefulness spread to Peggy's sorrowing little soul, and with it came a blessed sense of having a firm support at hand to lean upon, let the winds of adversity blow as they would. The firm arm and brave heart and ready,

resourceful wit were all hers for the asking; nay, were themselves pleading with her to be allowed to spend their life in her service, and she had flouted them and their owner but three days since, — yes, and answered the proffer of honest love by a slap in the face from an evergreen bough!

It would seem by all the laws of psychology that this angry humility and consciousness of her own errors should have made pretty Peggy more tolerant of the mistakes and shortcomings of others; but by a strange revulsion, as she drew near the corner where Elinor Calvert sat gazing into vacancy as if turned to stone by the sight of the gorgon's head, her anger swiftly changed its object. Slowly and somewhat scornfully Peggy looked her over from head to foot.

"Do you believe this calumny?" she asked.

No answer from lips or eyes.

"Oh, shame!" cried the girl. "I can bear it for the rest; but that you, who have known him half his life, you whom he loved, nay worshipped, putting you well nigh in the place of God above, that you should condemn him — oh, it is too much! Thank God he still has me to love and cling to him!"

Slowly the stony face relaxed, the fixed eyes began to see things once more, but the voice was still dim and distant as Elinor answered, —

"Cease, child! — prate no more of what you feel for Christopher Neville! You say you love too much to doubt him. What is your love to mine? I *know* him guilty, and yet, God help me, I love him still!"

CHAPTER XII

HOW LOVERS ARE CONVINCED

NOTHING is more impossible than to predict what one's emotions will be in any given crisis. If any one had told Christopher Neville that lying in a shed under accusation of murder, believed guilty by his lady love, cast off by his friend, his most acute sensation would be envy of the tobacco which the sentry was smoking outside the door, he would have laughed the prophet to scorn; yet so it was.

The nervous strain, added to the cold of the tobacco-house, was more than he could bear, and beyond any spiritual help he craved physical stimulant, something to make "a man of him" again, to give him back that courage and coolness which had never yet deserted him, but which he felt now slipping away fast.

At length he felt shame at such loss of manhood, and began to take himself to task.

"Come, now, Christopher Neville, thou sour-faced son of ill fortune!" he said aloud, as if talking to another person, "state thy woes, one

by one, and I will combat them with what heart I may. Begin then! — What first? "

"I am in prison."

"Where many a better man has been before thee. In a palace thou mightst be in worse company."

"I am cold."

"Walk about!"

"I am hungry."

"Pull down yonder tobacco-leaf and chew it."

"My friends have forsaken me."

"So did Job's."

"My sweetheart has turned the cold shoulder to me."

"Then do thou turn thy back full to her. Use thy reason, man alive! Hast thou lived to nigh forty years, to be hurt like a boy by a woman's inconstancy? Laugh at her, revile her if thou wilt, rip out round oaths; but, an thou be not quite demented, put not thy courage beneath the foot of her scorn!"

"But I love her."

"Ah, poor fool! There thou hast me. Thou knowst well I have no balm in my box to medicine that hurt. Yet what can't be cured, may be forgot, for a while at least. Wine would do it. Perchance tobacco may — Curse that guard! How good his pipe smells! — I would I had one."

Neville had never yet failed of a benefit for lack of asking, so now he set up a tattoo with his fists on the wall.

"What's wanted within there?" came gruffly from the guard.

"What would you want if you'd been shut up in this cold hole for a night and a day?"

"I might *want* ortolans and pheasants and a bottle of old Madeira; but if I was a murderer, and as good as a dead man myself, I should n't look to get them — not in *this* world."

Neville kept his temper. It was all he had left.

"Maybe not; but if you saw a fellow outside, with a pipe in his mouth and a tobacco pouch in his pocket, and another pipe bulging out at the breast of his jerkin, it's likely you'd count on his taking pity on the poor devil locked up inside, and giving him a bit smoke."

The guard weakened visibly. Neville could see through the crack that he half turned and put his hand irresolutely to his pocket. Then he straightened himself more rigidly.

"How do I know but you want to set the tobacco-house afire? And then off you'd be, and 't is I must answer for you to the Governor — a just man, but hard on one that fails in his duty."

"Come, then," called Neville more cheerfully, feeling his point half won; "why not come in and

smoke with me? Then you can keep an eye on me and the tobacco together, and it will be a comfort to me to have speech of a fellow mortal instead of being tormented by my cursed unpleasant thoughts."

Truth to tell, the guard was nearly as weary of solitude as his prisoner. This walking up and down in the dusk from one pine-tree to another was not lively work, and besides, there was a compelling magnetism in Neville's voice that had charmed stronger men than the guard, Philpotts.

Slowly, and with a certain reluctance to yield characteristic of Englishmen, and quite independent of the value of the thing conceded, he drew the heavy bolt and entered.

The interior of the shed, for it was scarcely more, was dismal enough in the half light. The long tobacco leaves hanging from the beams suggested mourner's weeds, and waved ominously in the wind as the door was opened. Daylight still peeped in through the chinks. By its help Neville studied the heavy outlines of the guard's figure clad in a sad colored campaign coat lined with blue and surmounted by a montero cap which shaded a pock-marked face, a typical English face, square cut, obstinate, with persistence and loyalty writ large all over it.

"Pardon my not rising," said Neville, as if he were receiving a courtier. "The cold and damp-

ness of this place have given me the rheum to such extent that each bone in my body hath its own particular pain. If I kneel my knees ache, if I sit my hips ache, if I bend my back aches."

"Marry," interrupted the jailer, with a coarse laugh; "'t is well you are to try hanging, which will rest them all."

"You have a very pretty wit, jailer, and so keen one would say it had been sharpened on an English whetstone. The French have no gift for such rapier thrusts."

"Oh, to Hell with the French!"

"Hell must be crammed full of foreigners. We English are always sending them there."

"No doubt you 'll know soon."

"Very likely. If I do, I 'll send you word — and by the way, so that I may not forget, what is your name?"

"Philpotts."

"Ah! Related to Robert Philpot of Kent?"

"No; no such fine folk in our line. Besides, my name is Philpotts."

"One *l* and two *t's*?"

"That same," replied the guard laconically, having no mind to be drawn into too friendly intercourse.

"A droll name!"

"None too droll for many an honest man to bear it."

"Pardon me, I doubt not the honesty; but I question whether there be many Philpottses floating round the world. I never knew but one, and he lived in Somerset."

"Somerset?"

"Ay, in a little village on the coast between the Mendip hills and the river Axe."

A look of recollection stole into the dull gray eyes, but still the shrewd self-restraint lingered.

"How did the village lie, and what is its name?"

"Its name is Regis, and it lies like a baby in a cradle, snugly tucked away in the dip of the hills; and there is a brook close beside it that comes tumbling over the rocks to lose itself in the Axe."

Philpotts nodded unconscious assent.

"Oh," continued Neville, "but I would like to see that river Axe once more! I do remember a famous pool where the fish leaped to the hook in the spring in a fashion to make a man's blood sing."

"Did ye know Philpotts, then?"

"Ay."

"What mought his first name ha' been?"

"James — James Philpotts. He had a farm of my father, and he and I were wont to go a-fishing together in the Axe, and one cold day he fell in. He could n't swim, if I remember; and how like a drowned rat he did look when he got out!"

At the memory, in spite of all his troubles, Neville laughed aloud. Philpotts slowly laid down his pipe, and propped it against a board, determined, before yielding to emotion, to attend to the safety of the tobacco-house. Then striding over to Neville he seized his hand in his own two brawny ones with a grip that made the other man wince.

"Swim? no, that he could n't, and it 's his life and all he owes to you, sir, and he bade me look out for you in the New World and pay back the service an ever I got the chance; but 't was the name misled me, — 'Jack Neville,' says my brother; 'Christopher Neville,' says the Governor in the manor-house yesterday."

"Ay, my name is Christopher; but as I had a cousin who bore the same, and who was often at Frome for months at a time, the family were wont to call me 'Jack,' after my father."

"So — thou — art — the son of Master John Neville of Frome House?"

The words came hard, as if forced out.

Philpotts stood looking at the prisoner till slowly the mouth began to work, two tears slipped out from his eyelids and slid down his nose. He put up the sleeve of his jerkin to wipe them off, and then, fairly overcome, leaned against his arm on the post in the corner and fell to sobbing aloud.

"Forgive me blubbering, sir; but, oh, to see

you in this sorry case, and me a-guarding you that should be helping you to escape. Shame on them that shut up an innocent man and planned his ruin!"

"An innocent man?" queried Neville; "why, 't is not five minutes since that I was a murderer unfit to share an honest man's pipe."

"God ha' mercy on my blind stupidity! I see not how I could ha' looked in your face and not seen that 't was na' in those eyes to look on a man to murder him nor in that mouth to swear falsely."

"Not so fast, Philpotts! Many a saint has had the ill luck to look like a pirate, and I was thrown in with a man in Algiers that I would have shared my last crust with, and he stole my wallet and made off with it in the night."

"Well, mebbe it 's because I 'm not of the quality and have no book learning, but when I feel things in my bones I don't question of them; and now my eyes are open and I see you 're innocent, I 'm going to help you out of this hole."

"But the danger —"

"To Hell with the danger! There never was a Philpotts yet was a coward."

"But your farm is well started here."

"Let it go to seed, then. It 's little good there is for a Protestant in this Papist province, anyhow, and I 'd not be sorry to be off to Virginia.

I 've a boat on the river below. So you see there 's nothing between you and freedom."

"Yes, there is one thing."

"An' what 's that, pray?"

As if in answer to the question came a rapid knock at the door outside. The guard grasped his musket and marched once or twice up and down the barn to recover his severe military bearing before he drew the door a crack open.

"Who goes there?"

"It is I, Mistress Calvert, cousin to Governor Brent."

Neville's heart felt as if it were an anvil, and some unseen power were laying on the hammer-strokes thick and fast. The blood surged to his face, and then fell back again leaving it white. She had come. Was he glad or sorry? Pride said, "You are sorry." Love whispered, "You are glad — do not deny it." Pride answered, "Yes, glad of the chance to make her sorry."

"I know not how to deny you, Mistress Calvert," came from without in Philpotts' voice, "but my commands are that none should enter save by the Governor's orders."

"Uncivil fellow!" Neville instinctively felt for his sword, and would have made a trial of his strength without it, but that on the instant he heard that voice, the voice that could make little shivers run from head to foot.

"You are in the right, as usual, good Master Philpotts, and foreseeing that you could not be swayed without the Governor's order, the Governor's order I have brought for a half-hour's talk with the prisoner, you meanwhile to be within call, but not within hearing. See! is 't not writ as I have said?" she asked, holding the paper toward him.

"I am not such a churl as to dispute a lady's word," said Philpotts, glad in this chivalrous manner to evade a too severe strain on his powers of reading a written document. "The Governor's order shall be obeyed," and swinging back the door he closed it again behind him and resumed his march from the green pine-tree to the brown one, and from the brown tree back again to the green, watching the yellow sun set behind the distant hills. His taciturnity yielded at last to the extent of one exclamation, "By the Lord Harry, what a coil!"

As Elinor Calvert entered she threw back her sable hood, and her pale, beautiful face, surrounded by its golden hair, shone like the moon against the dark setting of the tobacco-hung rafters. Her only ornament was the diamond crescent at her throat, which glistened as a ray of the setting sun struck upon it. Her eyes were full of unshed tears, and her lips trembled so that she could scarcely control them enough to utter the words

she had come to speak. Her hands were clenched tightly, as if by that force alone she held to her resolution.

Inside the door she waited for some word of welcome or greeting. She put up her hand to her throat as if to ease the sorrow which was rising and swelling within. By accident her fingers grasped the crescent, and she clung to it as to a talisman. Neville made no step toward her. He stood leaning against the wall, his arms folded before him. It was as if she were the criminal and he the judge. The silence was intolerable to Elinor.

"Speak to me!" she cried at last, stretching out her hands toward him. Her voice betrayed a dry anguish in the throat, and her breath came in quick, short gasps.

"Are you come as Governor Brent's messenger?"

Elinor shivered as though his tone had more chill in it than the January air, but her own was equally haughty as she answered, —

"I come by permission of my kinsman, who never deserts a friend."

"No, faith! since when the friend needs help he ceases to be one."

"Your words are brutal."

"Perchance. I have not been trained by your Fathers to mean one thing and say another."

Elinor felt for her hood as though she would have drawn it over her head again and left without another word; then changing her mind, she advanced nearer.

"This is not a kind greeting," she said, "for one who comes to help you."

"If I were not past help I might have spoke more kindly."

"Oh, but you are not past help. And that is what the Governor bade me say, that it is not too late; that he knows Father Mohl pricked you past endurance, and that he will move heaven and earth to get you off if you will but confess, so that no innocent man may suffer."

Neville bowed with ironical courtesy.

"You will give me an answer to take to him?"

"I have given Governor Brent my answer once."

"Oh, think! Do not send me away hastily. Think what is before you, — the chains, the prison, the — the *scaffold*."

Neville smiled.

"Have you no feeling? How *can* you smile?"

"Was I smiling? I suppose I was following your words and picturing the scenes you called up, especially the last. I was thinking about the fellows who would make the noose fast and swing me off, fancying, poor fools, that they had

killed me. How little they would know that the death came off weeks before, and was dealt by one glance from a pair of purple-gray eyes that said in yonder court-room, 'I count you guilty.'"

"Stay not to bandy phrases!" interrupted Elinor, swaying a little unsteadily on her feet. "Talk no more of guilt or innocence; but let us look about for another plan of escape since you will not trust Giles Brent. Look, I am near as tall as you. I measured height the evening you stood by me at the fire. You have fair hair, too, like mine. Let us change attire, and you in my cloak shall slip out yonder door."

"And you?"

"What matter what befalls me? As you say yourself, I have got my death wound already."

"But your boy — Cecil."

"There are others who will care for him. Mary Brent loves him as her own, and Giles will look to him for my sake."

Neville started; he had never thought before of that possibility of Brent's having once loved Elinor, yet why not, when none could be near her and not feel the magic of that charm before which even now his pride was ebbing fast; but this thought stung him to new haughtiness.

"You and your cousin have been equally at

fault in your judgment of me," he said, dryly. "I am as capable of murdering a priest as of taking shelter behind a woman and leaving her to bear my punishment. If I wished to escape I am not dependent upon your help. There are others, tried and true and firm believers in my innocence, who have offered me freedom, but my honor would not be clear. There is just one way out of the present coil, and that road leads up the scaffold — and down again."

"No! No! No! I say it shall not be!" cried Elinor, carried beyond herself in a burst of passion. "You must — you *shall* get away from this horrible place. Come!" she added with a smile, changing suddenly from anger to sweetness — "come! you have oft said there was naught on earth you would not do for my sake. Now what I ask is such a little thing."

"I have heard of Jesuit methods," said Neville, as if speaking to himself. "'T was a shrewd trick when other shifts failed to tempt a man through the woman he loved, the woman who had once loved him."

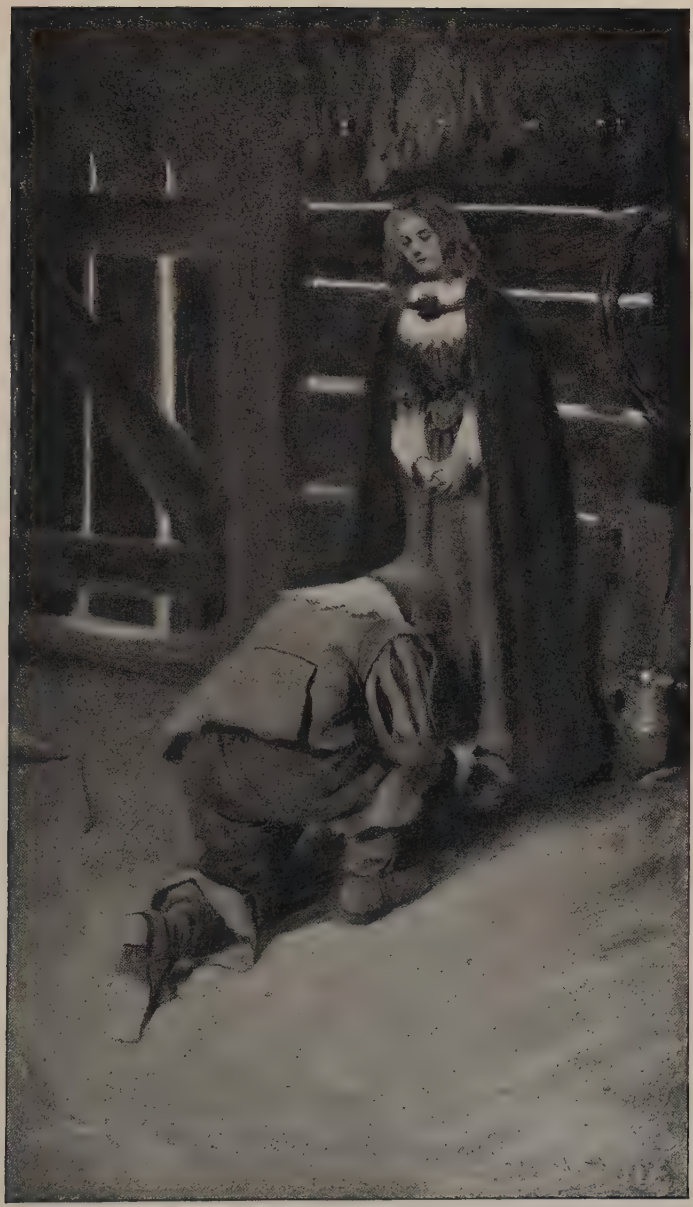
"*Had* loved thee! Would to God the taunt were true! Have not faith and reason grappled with each other through the long midnight hours, one saying, 'He is innocent, you feel it;' and the other, 'He is guilty, you know it'? And

at the end, when both fell down conquered by the combat, Love rose up greater than either and took me by the throat and brought me here. Listen, Christopher! If you have done this thing *I* have done it, for you and I are one. If you are put to death I will end my life by my own hand, and then we shall be together to all eternity; and what matter if the priests call it Hell!"

Neville took a step forward. Falling on his knees at her feet he raised the hem of her dress to his lips and kissed it once, twice, thrice.

"Oh, Elinor! Oh, my darling!" he murmured, "this is love indeed, perfect love which passeth understanding; but oh, how, how,"—with this he rose and strode impatiently up and down the floor—"how can you love me like this and still doubt me? You have known me these many years, you have seen me go in and out among my fellows, surely not like a cut-throat and assassin. You have seen me raise my hand to Heaven and swear in that high presence to my innocence, and still you condemn me. What in God's name can I do or say more?"

He fixed his eyes upon Elinor, whose whole frame shook with the force of the feeling that swayed her. The blood rushed up and overflowed her face and neck, and her voice sank



to a whisper as she leaned toward him and murmured, —

"I think — I think if you were to take me in your arms and whisper it in my ear, I — even I — should believe — and be at peace."

CHAPTER XIII

A CHANGE OF VENUE

FOR an hour after Elinor had left him Neville sat staring into the gathering dusk as if it had been the gate of Paradise. The swaying of the tobacco leaves in the night wind was as the rustle of angel's wings, and the light of heaven itself seemed to fall round him like a halo. For him life had been lived out, and looking back he pronounced it worth while. The years of suffering, of waiting, of toil and danger threatening to end in ignominious death were weighed in the balance against the minutes when he had held Elinor Calvert close to his heart, and lo the years flew up light as thistle-down, not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory of those transcendent moments when they stood together, he and she, cheek to cheek, heart to heart, no word said, because all was understood, and they two alone in the round world of a kiss.

Philpotts was quite disappointed when he came in with the lantern to find his prisoner so cheerful.

"I ha' brought summat to comfort you; but ye are smiling as if ye 'd been bid to the King's ball."

"Eh! What?" asked Neville, dreamily still.

"I 'm saying you might from your looks ha' been to court, or knighted over again, or summat like that."

"There 's more knighting than comes from the King's hand, my good Philpotts."

"H'm?" said Philpotts, uncomprehending.

"Nothing," answered Neville.

"I 'm glad to see you 're not giving in beaten."

"A man, Philpotts, is never beaten till he has said in his heart, 'I am beaten.'"

"That 's right. Keep up your heart, and your heart 'll keep you up in spite of Fate."

"Pooh! Show me Fate and I will show you the will of a man; but what have you there in your hand?"

"Oh, ye may well ask. 'T is no slight honor, I can tell you, to get a letter from Mistress Margaret Brent. I know 't is from her, for the boy that brought it bade me say so; twice he said it, and bade me not forget, as if that were likely."

Neville reached out his hand for the letter, and bending near the lantern broke the seal and read, —

"I am sure, sir, you will be glad to know that there are those who believe in your innocence and will do all they can to establish it. My position is a delicate one, for I can neither thwart those in power, nor openly act against them; but what I can do I will, and meanwhile should you by any chance reach Kent Island you may find a refuge and a shelter."

The note had neither beginning nor end.

"I thank you!" said Neville aloud, as if the writer of the note were near; and may not souls draw near as well as bodies?

Philpotts hearing his voice turned back.

"Was it good news?" he asked.

"The best."

"Will it help ye?"

"Ay, on the scaffold itself."

"Never be talking so much of what's far off. There's no luck in prophesying ill things. Was ever any one in your family hung?"

"No; none rose so high," said Neville, with bitter humor.

"Still another sending for thee. 'T was brought by Mistress Calvert's son while his mother was within. I wonder does the child think we mean to starve you." As he spoke he drew out a loaf of bread.

"He said you were not to wait till morning, but eat it *all* to-night."

Neville smiled, a sweet, wholesome, human smile.

"Give it me," he said, and broke off a great chunk. To his surprise he found the loaf hollow, and inside was Cecil's knife wrapped round with a bit of paper on which was scrawled in a childish hand, —

"I crep out of bed to get this Loaf. I was afraid of bars tho you say they cum not into houses. I dug out the Bred with my nife and thru the crums out at the Windo so Mother sh'd not see them. I hope you will stab your jalor, and jump out your Windo too. Sum day you shal cum to Robin Hood's Barn. You may keep the Nife. CALVERT."

"Here, Philpotts," said Neville, handing over the knife, "this is for you; but with your leave I will keep the note," and he folded it and laid it next his heart, as though it had been written by his own son.

"Why not keep it yoursel', Master?"

"I have no use for it."

"I can find one."

"Still harping on escape? Every one seems to know me for a coward."

"No son of Master John Neville was ever that; yet I do beg of you, sir, see, on my knees, to quit this prison now, this hour, for who knows what the next may bring forth!"

"My kind jailor, my good friend, get up from those honorable knees of yours which bend before adversity as most men's to prosperity."

"Your promise first!"

"Never to that you do propose; but here's my hand, and it's proud I am to offer it; and now, good-night, for it is well with me in body and soul, and I would fain try to fall asleep to see if I can conjure up again in my dreams certain visions which have made me happier than ever I was in my life before."

Philpotts thought Neville's troubles had driven him mad, and withdrew to his own corner, muttering curses on those that had unhinged this noble mind; but Neville lay still in such bliss as only angels and lovers know, till sleep came softly and kissed his eyelids.

The long slumber somewhat tarnished the glory of Neville's mood, and when he awoke at the turn of morning he was conscious of a reactionary depression of soul.

Say what we will of the gloom of gathering night, it is as nothing to the grimness of the gray dawn. Night swallows up detail. The facts of one's life seen in midnight hours may look tragic; but they are large and vague, with somewhat of the vastness of eternity. In the morning they stand out in all their bare, shabby pettiness, and we shrink back appalled from the tasks of the coming day.

As Neville woke he felt a hand upon his breast, and looking up saw Philpotts standing over him with a grave face.

"They 've come for you, Master Neville."

"'They?' Who?"

"They are come by the Governor's orders to fetch you away, belike to St. Mary's for trial. Oh, sir, but you 'd best have heeded my offer last night and got away while there was time!"

"My good Philpotts, when milk is spilled it is spilled, and there 's no good in thinking what fine puddings it would have made. You 've done your best for me, like a man. Now go away and forget the whole business. Plant your cabbages in the spring, and water them not with any tears for me!"

"Me go away! Not me, sir! And by good luck it 's orders that I 'm to be one of the escort to St. Mary's. That is, if 't is to St. Mary's we 're bound; but the orders are sealed, or some flummery like that they talked about, as the paper 's not to be opened till we 're out in the river."

"Ah! You make me feel like a State character. My importance is rising. Where are the gentlemen? We must not keep them waiting."

A rattle at the door showed that the visitors were growing impatient, and as Neville stepped toward it two men flung it open and entered hastily. One was tall, the other short. Both wore long cloaks and hats pulled rather low over their faces, as though they felt little pride in this

charge of their prisoner. In truth, Neville even in his short stay in the colony had made the reputation of a gentleman and a brave man, and there were many that grieved for him, and wondered whether the knife alone were evidence enough to hang a man upon. Moreover, despite the wise and liberal rule of the Lord Proprietor, the Papist-Protestant feeling ran high throughout the length and breadth of Maryland, and the Protestants were ready to a man to swear to Neville's innocence for no other reason than his religion.

This alone might have been enough to make Giles Brent wish the trial to take place at Kent Island, where enough force could be brought to bear to keep the peace while the trial proceeded.

"There is one favor I am fain to ask at your hands, gentlemen," said Neville, as he took up his hat.

"Any favor consistent with the Governor's wish and the good of the Commonwealth we will be pleased to grant."

"I have a sister at the Manor, a sister who would cry her pretty eyes out if her brother had the ill manners to take his departure without a word of farewell. May not our course take me past her window, that I may at least wave a good-bye?"

The smaller man, he of the purple cloak and broad, drooping purple hat, moved as if he were in favor of granting the petition; but the other spoke with some sternness, —

"We have no time for such courtesies as farewells spoken or wafted from finger-tips. Our orders are to set forward with all speed and to be aboard the ketch before sunrise."

"As you will. Poor little Peggy!" he murmured to himself. "So end all her plans of escape. On the whole I am glad. Now she will cease pestering me to save myself."

"I fear," said the larger man, "that we must ask you to submit to having your arms bound. 'T is an indignity we would gladly spare you, but the Governor's orders —"

"Spare me at least your apologies. On with the ropes!"

Five minutes later the door was flung open and the four men took the road. Neville in the lead with the tall stranger, Philpotts and the other following close behind. In his zeal to keep up with the great strides of Philpotts, the smaller man tripped over his sword and well-nigh fell down the steep pine-needle carpeted path slippery with hoar frost. The larger man looked back annoyed. Neville smiled at his discomfiture.

"Faith, Brent despatched a boy to do a man's work. Were 't not for Philpotts I could, an it

pleased me, make short work of you and yonder stripling."

"Ay, but it *is* for Philpotts; moreover, yonder stripling is marvellous handy aboard the boat, as you will see when we shake out the sails."

Neville spoke no more, but tramped along, looking well to his footsteps, for he too found the ground wet and slippery with its thin glazing of ice. The treacherous Southern winter was in one of its relenting moods, and the morning air, even now before the sun was fully risen, held a hint of spring. The green pines sent forth their sweet odor, and a bird fluttered up and flapped his bright wings full in Neville's face.

It was a morning to give a man courage for meeting life or for leaving it. Neville had faced danger and death too often to be wholly absorbed in his own fate, and now interwoven with his dull web of despair was a bright thread of enjoyment of the scene around him.

Never will any romancer truly tell the story of a man's inner life till he takes cognizance of the many trains of thought, gay and sombre, that can slide on side by side, neither wholly filling nor dominating the mind.

The tingling air, the slant sunshine, and the sense of unknown adventure awaiting him raised Neville's spirits, so that as a turn of the path brought the ketch in sight he found himself hum-

ming the refrain of a song, — a song he had first heard rippling from the lips of Elinor Calvert, oh, how many years ago, among the green fields of Somerset, —

> "Greensleeves was all my joy,
> Greensleeves was my delight,
> Greensleeves was my heart of gold,
> Who but Lady Greensleeves?"

The words called up a vision of Elinor as he had seen her at eighteen tripping along the forest paths of the Somerset woods, her robe as green as Maid Marian's and her floating sleeves catching ever and anon on bush or briar, — a blessed chance which gave her lover opportunity to bend over it and touch it with his lips whilst disentangling it slowly — oh, so slowly! And again he saw her in a dress of a similar fashion there in the hall of St. Gabriel's, and again she smiled upon him, and those warm slender fingers rested in his, and those perfect eyes unveiled their tender depths before his gaze. To have come so near and then to have lost — oh, it was unbearable! — and he kicked viciously at the innocent root of a tree in his path.

As the last words left his lips, his mood sank to despair again.

"Look alive there, sir! Jump aboard, Phil-

potts, and loosen that forward sheet! Sir Christopher, step on that board and you'll reach the stern easy! That's your seat by the helm."

"You are shivering," said the younger man, who had scarcely spoken till now. "Take my cloak."

"No, no," reproved his elder, "not too much softness to the Governor's prisoner! He'll do very well for a while yet with his jerkin and doublet. Come on! we need your help there forward."

"Let me thank you for the intention at least before you go," said Neville, ignoring the churlish speech of the older man and addressing himself to the one in purple. "A kind word may carry more warmth than a purple cloak." Then he sank back, gazing out over the water, while the sails were raised and the ropes cast off from the wharf, which slowly receded as the bright sunrise-tinted water slipped along the keel, and the brisk little waves slapped the side of the ketch as if daring her to a game of tag.

They were out in the river now. The Potomac spread far to the southward as far as eye could reach, with vague hints of low hills so near the hue of the water that one could scarce tell where water ended and land began, or where the land again slipped into the misty blueness of the western sky.

Neville strained his eyes to catch sight of a particular point as they passed it, — a point rising a little from the water and crowned with a thick growth of primeval forest. There lay Robin Hood's Barn, and the wide acres of Cecil's Manor stretched peacefully along the river just where it widened into the bay.

There is a peculiar irony in watching in our unhappiness the scenes associated with hours of hope and joy. Neville smiled bitterly as he contrasted what might have been with what was. Then he reproached himself for a coward and a faint heart that was ready to yield to the first buffet of Fate. He resolved to turn his mind from gloomy thoughts and find comfort in the cheerfulness around him.

The ketch was running free with all sails spread and looked like a big white bird skimming the surface. It was a sight to cheer the heart of the most downcast, but more cheering still was the smell of breakfast a-cooking in the cabin, and right willingly did Neville respond to the call and seat himself at the rude board in the tiny cabin, which, rude as it was, proved a welcome shelter from the fresh wind blowing outside.

"I reckon," he said, looking with a smile at his captors, "that I am to be allowed the freedom of my arms while eating unless ye do intend to feed me with a pap spoon like an infant."

"All in good time, Sir Christopher." It seemed to be always the tall man who spoke.

"Curse his ready tongue! Why will he never give the other fellow a chance?" thought Neville, but held his peace while the spokesman continued, —

"Before we remove the rope we want your oath to two things. First, that you will make no effort to escape. Second, that you will cheerfully obey our orders and those, whatever they may be, in this sealed paper."

"A largish contract; but for the first I can well afford to promise, since having put aside the chance of escape when 't was easy, I am not like to undertake it now 'tis become well-nigh impossible. I 'm neither whale nor Jonah that I should set out to swim a matter of a dozen miles to land; and as for running away, I am bound to see this trial to a finish and try what Maryland law for Protestants is."

Here Philpotts was guilty of the indiscretion of sighing. Neville, fearing he would show himself too much the prisoner's friend for his own good, turned upon him with simulated fierceness.

"Sirrah, I will have none of your officious sighing as if I were already as good as a dead man. Keep your breath to cool your porridge. When I want it I 'll ask for it.

"Now," turning again to his interlocutor, "as

for the second clause, you ask a trifle too much. As much of your will as I must obey I shall, and with three against one to enforce it that share seems likely to be well-nigh the whole; but as to the cheerfulness with which I meet it, that must needs depend on God and my own mind. But make haste ere those cakes be cold to unbind me and let me have at them!"

"Are you satisfied with the prisoner's promise?"

The other two men nodded, and Philpotts went on deck again. The stripling began in a trice to undo the ropes which bound Neville, whereupon he fell to and made as hearty a breakfast as ever he laid in on firm land with high hopes and bright prospects.

When they were come out of the cabin again, he noticed that the boat had changed her course and was running with a beam wind.

"Why, how's this?" he asked of Philpotts as he took his seat once more by the stern. "Surely this ketch is not laying her course for St. Mary's."

"Do not ask me, sir! I'm not the captain of this infernal ketch. In truth, I'm no sailor at all, and would be right glad if I could be set ashore this minute."

Neville could have laughed as he saw the green and yellow melancholy that too surely tells

the story of coming sea-sickness, but pity ruled and he said sympathetically, "Go you below, and I'll keep the helm till you have braced your insides with some hot meat and drink."

"How's this?" cried the tall man, coming on deck just as Neville reached for the tiller. "Mutiny already! Troth, I have a pair of irons below, and you shall be clapped in them if I see you move toward the tiller again. Philpotts, give me the helm and go below!"

Neville shrugged his shoulders, but refrained from speech. He withdrew his outstretched hand, pulled his hat over his eyes, and sat gazing over the sail at the blue distance which seemed of a sudden peopled with all the friends of a lifetime. He could see his father and mother seated by the great stone fireplace at Frome Hall, the Irish setter with his head on his master's knee. Yes, and there in her own little chair, the tiny Peggy, with rebellious curls shaken back every now and again from the bright eyes beneath them, and then the quick lighting up of the face, the leaning forward of the little figure as Christopher himself entered the room with his game-bag over his shoulder, the eager peep into the bag, and the jumping up and down with delight as she counted the tale of the day's success.

Perhaps he had scarcely realized in those days how much that little sister's adoring love had

meant to him. But now it all came back with a swift stab. Oh, to take her in his arms once more, to tell her how he felt to the heart's core her loyalty and devotion! Why do these impulses so often come too late to all of us?

As Neville withdrew his gaze from the water to the deck, the hallucination of familiar figures followed him. There close at his elbow was the dear round face with its roguish dimples and mischievous eyes, not cast down and swollen with crying as he had seen them last, but full of life and light, and her dear voice was murmuring in his ear, —

"Kit, my darling brother, I am here. Are you glad?"

Neville brushed his arm across his eyes: the figure was too real. It savored of madness, but it would not move. When he opened his eyes again, there it stood, more solid than ever, but now the tears were rising in the eyes, and the hands were stretched out softly toward him.

"Where am I? What does it mean?" Christopher murmured.

"It means," said the senior escort, removing his hat, and revealing the dark curls of Romney Huntoon, "that we have decided upon a change of venue for your case, and have arranged to remove the jurisdiction to Romney Hall, York County, Virginia."

"Bless my soul!" cried Philpotts, from the companionway; "he 's told him, the mean devil, and me not there to see the fun — me, that 's beaten any play actor in the old country at deceiving tricks. Sir Christopher, the Captain and crew of the ketch *Lady Betty* are at your service, and it 's no more of prison bars we 'll hear after we touch Protestant Virginia."

"Peggy, Peggy, what have you done?" exclaimed her brother, bending over her brown head as it lay on his breast, as she knelt close beside him.

"Done? We have saved you from prison, to be sure. He and I and good Master Philpotts, that we thought to outwit and found full ready to help us. And this is Master Huntoon's boat all ready loaded for Romney. He brought it round yesterday from St. Mary's. He 's rather clever, that Master Huntoon, though he keeps his wits mostly for great occasions."

"Vastly clever of you all three, and vastly dull of me to be your dupe! I thank you all heartily; and now will you please put your helm about, and head the ketch for St. Mary's with what speed you may?"

"Christopher!" exclaimed Peggy, in such a heart-broken voice that her brother clasped her closer than ever as he said, —

"Indeed, indeed, I appreciate what you have

all done, and risked for me, but I cannot run away."

"Then you care nothing for me compared with your flimsy honor."

"Nay, 't is partly that I care so much for you that I must have a care of this flimsy honor, which is yours as well as mine. Philpotts, will you kindly put about that helm?"

Philpotts made a motion to obey; but Huntoon stopped him with a movement of his hand.

"Listen, Sir Christopher, I pray you," he said. "Of course I am a younger man, and you may resent my counselling you; but remember, I love your sister, and her honor and yours are no less dear to me than to you. I see the situation more clearly as a looker-on, and this is how it looks to me. There is no hope here and now of a fair trial. The Catholics are hot for the punishment of the murderer of a priest, and Calvert and Brent have already angered them by the leniency they have shown to Protestants. Give the matter but time to cool, and make sure of a fair hearing. That is all I ask."

Neville sat silent with his head bowed on his hands for an instant, then he spoke low but firmly, —

"Go! I must have time to think. Go you all below and give me the helm! When I have made up my mind, I will summon you, and my

decision must stand. You, Huntoon, must give me back the oath I swore to obey you. This matter touches none so close as me, and in my hands it must be left. Go!"

Slowly and dejectedly the three conspirators crept into the cabin. There Romney and Peggy sat silent and expectant for what seemed an eternity. Ropes creaked, sails flapped on deck. Who could say what was passing? At length they heard a cheerful call of "All hands on deck!"

They rushed up the companionway and saw Christopher standing at the helm, his hair blown back and his hand grasping the helm, the tiller pushed far to port, and the ketch standing for St. Mary's.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH FATE TAKES THE HELM

AS the three conspirators emerged from the companionway one after another, they made a forlorn picture of disappointment, so chapfallen were the faces of all. Philpotts stood still, his shaggy eyebrows drawn into a frown, and under them a pair of eyes that threatened resistance. 'T was as if Sancho Panza had come to the end of his patience with Don Quixote, and thought it time that common-sense took control for the good of all concerned.

Romney twisted his cap and looked at Peggy, who bit her lips to keep back the tears which, in spite of her will, were gathering in her eyes, and standing large on the fringe of her lashes.

As Christopher watched her, he felt his courage ebbing so fast that he must either yield or smile. He chose the latter.

"Troth," cried he, "'t is as though you were condemned criminals and I the judge. For having connived at the escape of a prisoner, I do sentence you to a happy life forever after, but in

the present case to be balked of your good intent. Wherefore I am bound for St. Mary's, there to surrender myself to Sheriff Ellyson; but 't is no part of my plan to give you up too. So if you are minded to risk the trip across the bay without yonder shallop bobbing along behind us like an empty cork, I 'll e'en borrow it, when we are within a mile of the town and then —" here he paused and swallowed hard for a minute, "then, tried friends and true, we 'll say good-bye for a while and you must continue on your way."

"Let them go, then, since thou wilt have it so, and we will make our way safe to St. Mary's, thou and I."

It was Peggy who spoke, coming close to her brother and looking up at him with unwavering love in her eyes.

"Nay, nay, little sister," said Christopher, gathering her soft hand into his. "That will not content me neither. Thou art well-nigh a part of myself, and it will content me much, whate'er betides, to feel that one part at least is happy. I will not have thee go back where thou must be made wretched by hearing hard words of thy brother, and be looked down upon by all. Huntoon, thou hast in right manful fashion declared thy love for my sister Margaret here. I venture not to give her answer. That must thou win from her thyself, and perchance 't is not

yet ready for the giving; but I trust her in thy keeping. Take her back to thy mother! She will, I know, receive her tenderly, for I am familiar with the repute of Mistress Huntoon's hospitality."

Huntoon came swiftly forward and grasped Neville's other hand, which released its hold on the tiller as Philpotts took the helm. Tears stood in the lad's eyes.

"Be sure," he said, "that your sister shall be treated with that love and reverence which are her due, nor shall she be hurried to any decision she might after regret. To my mother she will be dear as a daughter of her own."

Men are prone to believe in a family welcome to their loves as warm as their own. It does not always fall out according to expectation, but Romney Huntoon knew his mother's heart, which was soft to a folly, especially to young and unhappy lovers; she herself having suffered much, 't was said, in her youth.

"'T is well," said Neville, clasping Huntoon's hand on his right almost as firmly as he held his sister's on the other side. "Thou art a man after my own heart; and if thou dost win this little sister of mine, be tender, be gentle to her whimsies, of which she hath a full assortment; but keep the whip hand, my friend, keep the whip hand! And now one more charge I pray thee

accept for my sake. This good Master Philpotts, — he is not made for a roving life, as his sea-sickness but now did bear witness, yet hath he without a murmur left farm and implements and all means of earning a livelihood to help me out of this hard place."

"Yes, and if thou wert a wiser man, thou wouldst stay helped and not go throwing thyself back into the pit from which we ha' digged you."

"Have thy fling, good friend Philpotts! Having never laid claim to wisdom, I am not oversensitive to the charge of lacking it; but what I would say to Master Huntoon was this, that if my lands at home in England be not confiscate, I do intend them as a dowry for my sister. I would counsel that they be sold and land taken up in Virginia, where Philpotts may have a farm and implements as many as he left and whatsoever more is needed."

Philpotts tried to speak, but could not. The tears choked him. He gulped and bent over the tiller. Peggy, too, was crying hard, and Huntoon sat with steady gaze fixed upon Christopher.

The silence that fell upon the little group continued long. So much must be said if that silence were once broken! So bowed down were their hearts that it seemed quite natural that the sunshine should fade out of the sky and a universal grayness slowly spread itself over the sea.

Philpotts was first to speak. "Look yonder, Captain!" he said, pointing Huntoon to the eastward; "is that yonder Watkins Point or a bank of fog?"

"That's the Point. No, it cannot be the Point either, — 't is too far south for that; besides, it looms as we look. It is drawing nearer, and the fogs do drift in with marvellous quickness in these waters. Give *me* the helm!"

"'T is unlucky," murmured Neville, "for 't is not the easiest thing in the world in the brightest weather to make one's way past all these headlands, they are so much alike. What's that craft yonder by the wooded point?"

Huntoon made a glass of his two hands. "She hath the look of a packet sloop outward bound, somewhat heavy laden too, for she lies low in the water and goes slowly with a fair wind."

"How far away is she?"

"A matter of a mile, I should say."

"Ay," put in Philpotts, "and she hath seen the fog too, and is setting all sail to make what way she can before it strikes her."

The air grew colder as the sky clouded, and Huntoon brought Peggy's red cape from below and wrapped it close about her. She thanked him with a smile that he thought the sweetest and the saddest thing he had ever seen.

The fog was closing in on them now, and the wind dropped before it. The rail dripped with the chill dampness, and the sails flapped heavily as they swung over the deck whenever the vessel changed her course.

"Peggy dear, wilt thou not go below and keep warm?" said Christopher's voice.

"Nay, let me stay by thee whilst I can; and, Kit, if I obey thee in this, mind, 't is only that I may help thee more. Romney — Master Huntoon — hath friends in the colony who are sure to sift this matter to the last. And it will go hard but we find some way to bring thee aid and comfort yet."

"Philpotts, can you see how we are heading?"

"No, faith, Master Huntoon, no more than if I were blindfold. The wind is dead ahead now; but whether it hath shifted or the boat hath run off its course, I know not."

"Hearken!" cried Peggy, putting her hand to her ear. "Did ye hear no noise? Methought I caught a sound as of a horn or a distant bell. Perchance 't was the church bell ringing for noonday prayers. I heard them telling of some saint's day celebrated to-day."

All the men stood listening. Neville rose and running along the deck climbed to the bowsprit to listen again. Suddenly he cried out at the top of his voice, "Boat ahoy! Ahoy there!"

Too late! The three huddled together in the stern were aware of a large vessel looming up and up above them, rising with the rising wave, and then lunging forward full upon *The Lady Betty*. Huntoon clasped Peggy in his arms as though he could shield her thus from the inevitable crash. Philpotts dropped the helm and rushed forward to drag back Neville. Again too late. The two boats met with a shock.

By good luck when Philpotts dropped the helm, *The Lady Betty* had veered away from the larger vessel, so that the packet's bowsprit, having crashed against her, bumped along against the side, knocking away rail and stanchion, and staving a hole in her, deep and dangerous but not instantly fatal. For one instant all drew a breath of relief at the deadly peril passed. Then, to their dismay, they heard Philpotts crying out, "He 's overboard! The bowsprit hit him!"

"Overboard!" cried Peggy; "but he is a famous swimmer, surely he can reach the boat."

Even as she spoke, something white rose to the surface and sank again, and Peggy knew it for Christopher's face with death in it, and but for Romney's strong arm around her, she, too, would have thrown herself into that cold grave.

"Let me go to him!" she shrieked aloud in her anguish of soul. "O Kit! Dead! Dead!"

The words seemed to fall dully on the sur-

rounding wall of fog. No sound; not even an echo answered. Away to the right a single sail flitted ghostlike, showing no hull to support it. On the left close at hand loomed the packet which had wrought so much harm.

Save for these the waters were bare of life, and the girl in the ketch sat looking with frozen gaze, as if she had seen the Gorgon's head, at that spot unmoved now by so much as a ripple, that silent grave which had opened and closed again over a life precious to her beyond aught else that earth held.

As she gazed, she was seized by a sudden madness, following hard upon the stony stillness.

"I will go! I will!" she screamed, struggling with Romney's grasp, which held like steel. She was as powerless in that clasp as a bird in a gauntleted hand.

Of her sense of powerlessness a new emotion was born, a nameless quivering thing that nestled in the heart of her desolation and in that moment of deepest despair struck a peace.

CHAPTER XV

DIGITUS DEI

MUCH ado there was at St. Gabriel's when it was found that the door of the tobacco-house stood open, and the prisoner was gone. All the more exasperating was it when it proved that there was no one to be blamed or held responsible, because the jailor was gone too.

Each member of the household took the news of the escape differently.

Cecil jumped for joy. Father White betook himself to solitude and prayer in his oratory. Mary Brent made few comments, but went about with her mouth pursed up as though she feared to relax the muscles lest they betray her into rash words. Her light lashes too were cast down and her eyes carefully discharged of all expression.

Such silence has more power to irritate than reproaches or curses.

Elinor felt this irritation so keenly that she could not stay in the house with her cousin, but

took refuge in the woods beneath the calm sky, in that silence of Nature which holds only balm for wounded hearts.

Brent too thought it well to give his sister a wide berth. His own irritation found vent in an honest volley of oaths directed impartially at himself and each member of the household except perhaps Ralph Ingle, to whom he turned for that comfort which a strong and autocratic nature finds in a pliant one. With such a man as Brent, to concur is to conquer.

Ingle in return gave him sympathy and silence. Silences differ as widely as speech, and Ingle's silence was no more like that of Mary Brent than the calm of a sunny day is like the electric stillness preceding storm. Ingle's silence was full of delicate suggestions of assent, of a sympathy too subtle to be put into words, of comradeship and support to that self-esteem which just now felt itself sadly shaken.

No wonder his company was desired! We succeed with others as we comprehend them. We value others as they comprehend us.

Giles Brent was a man of action, and lost no time in locking and double barring the stable door after the horse was stolen.

Two messengers he despatched to St. Mary's to learn, if they could, whether any news had reached the town of Neville's escape. The other

available men he divided into parties of four, and sent them to scour the woods in all directions. Then, taking Ralph Ingle with him, he buckled on his sword, lifted two guns from the rack in the hall, and marched grimly down the little path to the wharf.

"You have a keen eye, Ingle, and are a mariner born and bred. Therefore have I brought you with me, for it seems far likelier that Neville has made his escape by sea than by land. I will take the helm, and do you go before the mast and keep a sharp lookout for any small boat, especially one that may seem to hug the wooded points at the mouth of the river."

Ingle ventured a few words by way of conversation, but found his companion in a taciturn mood and not to be drawn into conversation. Both men scanned every headland and inlet till their eyes ached, but with no success, till at length Ingle called out, —

"There's a ship yonder, — a packet, I should say, from the size and build of her."

"Ay, for a guess 't is Prescott's. I ordered him from St. Mary's yesterday for being too much hand in glove with that scapegrace brother of thine."

A pained look crossed Ralph Ingle's face.

"Forgive me!" said Brent, who had a soft heart under a quick temper. "Whatever may be

said of your brother, I put trust in you, and here 's my hand on 't."

Ingle did not note the outstretched hand, for his eyes were fixed on something beyond the ship, a smaller boat making for St. Mary's.

"Look!" he said, "to the right there, to the southward of Pine Point! Damnation, how the fog is shutting down!"

Even as he spoke a film gathered between him and the two boats, — a film deepening into a thick veil and that into an impenetrable, impalpable wall of fog.

Brent held his boat straight on her course. On, on, till once again he caught the outline of the packet looming close at hand. Then from the other side he heard a voice which he recognized as Neville's shouting "Boat ahoy!" Then a crash as if a sea monster had both boats and were grinding them between his teeth. A rebound, and then another crash, and above the noise the voice of Philpotts crying, "My God! He 's gone!" and a woman's voice sobbing, "O Kit! Dead! Dead!"

"Hard alee!" shouted Ingle to Brent. "Hard alee! or we shall be in the coil with the rest;" and running aft he threw his whole weight on the tiller just in time to shave the packet. They swept into open water, and the wind bore them away till once more the two boats

looked like gray phantoms against the grayer sky.

"Well done, Ingle! But for your quickness we should have been snarled up with the other boats. Next time we must come to them with more caution."

"Why take the risk again? Death has been before us in claiming our prisoner."

"Ay, but his jailor and the accomplices are yet to be reckoned with if Maryland justice is not to become a byword and a hissing."

"Governor Brent," Ingle spoke in slow, reluctant tones, "did you chance to read the name of the larger packet as we passed?"

"Nay, I was too much occupied with saving the skin of my own boat. Did you?"

"I did."

"And the name —"

"Was *The Reformation*."

"Ah!"

"Yes, and I saw Dick aboard her striding up and down the deck in a fury, swearing like the cutthroat he is."

"Yet shall he not hinder me from the performance of my duty. No man shall say that Giles Brent is a coward."

"No fear that any man will ever say that. Let none have cause to say that the Lieutenant-General, Admiral, Chancellor, Keeper of the

Great Seal, Chief Captain, Magistrate, and Commander of the Province forgot the sacredness of trust involved in all these offices and ran risks. Do not drive me to say what risks; but believe me when I say that I know my brother well, and I know he would stop at nothing, — even to the carrying off of an officer of the King. He is mad, fairly mad, over his treatment at St. Mary's yonder."

Brent frowned, shook his head, and hesitated as if uncertain what course to pursue, then he gave the helm to Ingle entirely, saying, —

"You are right. It is hard to draw the line betwixt cowardice and caution; but in Calvert's absence I have no right to run risks."

Still in the distance hovered the two phantom ships gray against the universal grayness, yet dimly discernible, the smaller boat settling lower and lower like some despairing animal feeling death near at hand yet struggling to the last.

"It is the end," said Ralph Ingle. "The man is drowned, and his boat is sunk. Whatever he has done, he has made the fullest atonement man can make."

"Yes," said Brent, uncovering his head. "I think that we have seen the end of this unhappy business. A life has been given for a life. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Ralph Ingle bowed his head as one too much moved for words.

Silently they drifted shoreward and still silently clewed up the sail and tied the boat to the dock. Once more Brent held out his hand. "You have proved yourself a tried and trusty comrade this day, and if you have aught to ask of me, be sure I stand ready to grant it."

"Nay, nay," said Ralph, with his frank smile, "'t were poor comradeship to begin with asking of favors; besides, there is naught in your gift that I crave unless — unless —"

"Out with it, man!"

"Well, then, your influence with your kinswoman, Mistress Elinor Calvert."

Brent started.

"I never dreamed of this," he said.

"Nor I, on my faith, till I was so deep there was no turning back. She is one of those women that to love once is to love always. I would do anything for her, — sacrifice my life, nay, my soul itself, — but she is cold as the ice floating in yonder river."

Giles Brent's face grew set and stern.

"I can well believe it, for I fear 't is not alone that she loves you not; but that her heart has been given to another and clings but the closer, the unworthier she finds him."

"Then it *was* Neville. I suspected as much.

But now, surely now that he is dead, there may be a chance for me."

"My friend, you little know Elinor Calvert. She has made this murderer into a saint, and she will burn candles to his memory and say masses for his soul while she lives."

"Hush! is this not she coming down the path?"

"Ay, go you round through the underbrush and leave me to tell her."

So advised, Ingle took a short cut through the woods, and Brent, walking on alone, met Elinor face to face.

"Good morrow, Cousin!"

"Would it were a *good* morrow, Giles! But that can scarce be till we are good ourselves and credulous of good in others."

"I have no time to play with words. I am come from stern scenes that wring men's souls."

Elinor turned pale.

"Hast thou seen him?"

"By *him* signifying Christopher Neville, I doubt not. Now I might put thee off by saying I have not seen him, as in a sense I have not; yet I have been near him and in a way to know his fate, which, not to delay ill news in the telling, is death by drowning."

Elinor answered not a word. She grew deadly

white, bowed her head, and turning about began to walk toward the house.

Brent would not have been surprised to see her swoon at his feet, but this unnatural calmness terrified him.

"Whither art thou bound?" he asked, catching up with her.

"To the manor-house — there to say a prayer for the soul of him that's gone, then to pack my belongings and Cecil's."

"To *pack?*"

"Ay, and to make ready for our departure to St. Mary's. There we will make our home till we can betake ourselves to Cecil Manor. The house of the Brents can never again be shelter for me or mine."

"Elinor! Have I deserved this?"

"Thou hast been a kind kinsman to me, Giles, and for the past I thank thee; but thou art a hard man, and my heart is bitter against thee for the part thou hast played in driving an innocent man to his death."

"I drive the poltroon!" muttered Brent. "Was he not drowned in a cowardly attempt to escape from a trial he dared not face?"

"No!" flamed Elinor.

"Thou dost speak as one who knows. Perhaps thou hast information. How canst thou talk so bold?"

"I talk so bold because I do know — alas! none better. I — I tempted him — the other night — I promised him aid and begged him to escape, and he would not. He scorned the cowardice and vowed he would stand his trial and abide by the result."

"Some other must have had more influence with him, then, for there was a woman's voice in the boat when he sank."

"Bless her!" cried Elinor, "whoever she was, that did plan his safety — but hold. I know who it was, — his sister Peggy, — who, as we thought, went back to St. Mary's yesterday; whether he be taken with or against his will, she is with him. God has been kind to her, but she deserved it, for she was stanch and true. She has her deserts, and I had mine. 'T was God's truth she spoke when she told me I had been false, and vowed she never wished to see my face again. I know how she felt, for I feel it now toward thee. Ay, stand back, Giles, and hear my vow: Never again after this day will I hold converse with thee or remember that there is a bond of kinship between us till thou shalt kneel as I have knelt in contrition and shame for the part thou hast played."

"These are wild vows, Elinor, and will be repented when thou dost consider them. I would be well-nigh as glad as thou to see Christopher

Neville acquitted of the charge of this terrible crime. To say truth, against all the evidence, against reason itself, I cherished faint hope that something might be unearthed even yet to show us that we had all been mistaken, but now that he hath skulked away under cover of darkness — why, 't is the same as a confession."

"Ay, and for that reason he has never done it. Never — *never* — *never!* 'T is not in his nature, not near so much as to have done the murder of which he stands accused. Giles, 't is but a little while since thou didst urge my taking Christopher Neville for my tenant yonder at Cecil Manor; and why? Because, thou saidst, he was the boldest and the truest and the faithfullest man in Maryland. So he was and is. Thinkst thou a man's soul is changed in a day or two days or a week? Fie! thou hast not enough knowledge of human nature to be ruler of a county, much less a commonwealth."

Brent drew his brows together impatiently.

"'T is all very well to rail like that, but it proves nothing. He is gone. That is a fact not to be gainsaid. What is it, then, but jail-breaking?"

"Ay, but he may not have gone of his free will."

"A likely story. Who, then, hath taken him by force?"

"How do I know? Some that have reason

to profit by his accusation, yet fear to press the trial to the end. Perchance the fathers of St. Inigo's."

Giles Brent was furious, all the more that the same possibility had been floating dimly in his own mind. He answered coldly, —

"Since thou art so lost to all sense of dignity and decency in the cause of thy lover as to accuse Holy Church herself rather than admit what one who runs may read, that he hath done a dastardly deed and then hath run away to escape the consequences, why, I will waste neither argument nor entreaty, but when the day comes that all is made clear, thou wilt have a heavy account to settle."

"I know not how it may be in the future of this world, Giles; but when the day comes that the secrets of all hearts are laid open, I feel sure as that I stand here that Christopher Neville will have naught to fear. For myself my shame will be that I loved not too much, but too little. To love cautiously is not to love at all. For thee, thy punishment — the hardest, I believe, for a just man — shall be to see too late the wrong thou hast done; the friendship lightest held where it should have been strongest, the faith withheld where the hand should have been outstretched in aid, the life sacrificed that should have been a bulwark to the state, —all this will be laid at thy door — "

Then, — with a sudden break, — "God forgive me! What a hypocrite I am! My sin is heavier than thine. I knew him, I loved him, and I failed him. Death holds no bitterness like this."

Without another word she turned and left him.

Brent fell back, awed by the force of her passion, and stood still watching her as she swept on, a tall vision of Nemesis, vague and gray in the mist that clung about the long folds of her cloak. On she walked, slowly at first, then faster and faster till she was almost running. At the third bend of the path a man slipped out from behind the twisted pine, and fell in with her step so naturally that she was scarcely conscious of his companionship.

There was a softness in Ralph Ingle's silence, a soothing quality in his sympathy that made itself felt. Elinor's gait slowed, and she removed the hands that had been pressed to her temples, as if to quiet the intolerable throbbing pain.

"Pity me!" — Ralph Ingle spoke low.

"I pity thee! Have I room in my heart for pity of any save myself?"

"Thou shouldst have for one more miserable than thou."

"That cannot be; and why shouldst thou need pity?"

"Because thou art sorrowful, and I can give thee no help. Is not that reason enough?"

Elinor stopped and looked at him with wide, half-seeing eyes, striving to force herself to put aside her own trouble enough to realize that of another.

"Do not!" she cried, stretching out defensive hands, "do not tell me that I have made someone else wretched too! My life seems destined to be a calamity to all who fall within its fateful shadow."

"No; speak no such sad words," cried Ingle, falling on his knees before her. "To me your presence has been pure sunshine; but were life all shadow, I would rather live under the clouds with thee than in the light of heaven itself without thee."

"Forgive me!" answered Elinor, wearily, brushing her hand across her eyes. "It is idle to talk thus. I loved — I love — Christopher Neville, and I cannot listen to any other."

"My words were untimely; I spoke too soon."

"Nay, for me there is no time any more, — only a waiting for eternity."

"Think a moment, Elinor! I must call thee so once if nevermore. Wilt thou in good earnest condemn me to despair?"

"I condemn no one. If despair be thy por-

tion, thou must needs drink the cup as I am draining mine. Farewell!"

"Farewell, then, Elinor Calvert! And on thy head be my soul's ruin, and all that may befall me or thee hereafter!"

So absorbed in her own grief was Elinor that her ear scarcely caught his words, nor did her mind take note of his wild look and manner as he flung away into the forest. She quickened her pace and saw with relief the walls of the manor-house rising between the trees. A few more paces and she would reach the house, then if Fate were kind, her room, and then she could at least be alone with her despair; but no, she thought bitterly, even this poor comfort was to be denied her, for, as she drew near the house, she saw Father White standing in the doorway. She would have swerved from the path and sought entrance through the side room, but it was too late; she had been seen. Father White moved toward her like some strong merciful angel, holding healing and benediction in his outstretched hands.

"My daughter, thou art ill."

"Ay, Father, so ill that I must needs with all speed seek rest in my chamber."

"Is it indeed illness, or grief?"

"They are much alike."

"Ay, but they may need differing treatment."

"Rest and solitude are best for both."

"Nay, for bodily sickness thou hast need of a physician of the body, and for soul sickness of a physician of the soul."

"Father," said Elinor, sinking on her knees before him, "I am past all help of medicine for body or soul — *He is dead!*"

The old priest raised his eyes to heaven, murmuring to himself, "*Digitus Dei est hic.*— Yes," he added slowly, "surely it is the finger of God himself, and it is the Lord who has spoken."

Aloud he said: "I know how troubles such as thine shake the soul till there is no power left to seek aid. Then the Lord sends the help the sufferer is too weak to reach out a hand for. If thou shouldst probe this wound of thine, thou wouldst find that its deepest hurt lay not in what hath befallen without, but from that which hath gone wrong within."

"'T is God's truth thou speakest."

"There lies no help in man."

"None! None!"

"Then look above! Oh, my daughter, hast thou not before found comfort at the confessional, at the foot of the altar? Listen: I am a priest of God and charged with power to absolve sin and declare His pardon to weary, struggling souls like thine."

With a wild cry Elinor threw up her arms above her head.

"Talk not to me of God's pardon! Will that bring Christopher Neville to life? Will that save his poor heart one of the pangs my distrust dealt, or his faithful soul one hour of the weary years my cold disdain cost him? Nay, Father, save pardon and penance for those who can still use them! I tell you, it is *I* who cannot forgive *myself*, — *I!*"

CHAPTER XVI

LIFE OR DEATH

"HOLD her, Philpotts! Dead or alive, I must find *him*."

With these words, as Philpotts laid his controlling hand on Peggy's wrist, Huntoon threw off his coat, kicked away his boots, and springing to the taff-rail, plunged into the icy water. As he plunged, the body rose again, this time further away from the boat, and Huntoon struck out towards it.

Peggy shut her eyes and prayed.

One minute — two — three — went by. Then with fear and trembling, white as the sea-gull that wheeled above her head, the girl opened her eyes once more, and strained them toward the spot where Huntoon had plunged. Not there; so he too had gone. No, that dark object to the right must be his head; now she could see one strong arm cleaving the water, and surely, surely he was holding some person, some *thing* with the other. Yes, and now he is calling for a rope. Oh, fool, fool! not to have thought of that!

She turned to the cabin; but Philpotts was before her. He dashed down the companionway, and reappeared with a coil of rope in his hand. Bracing himself against the mast, he flung the coil with all his might. It flew straight as an arrow and fell within reach of Huntoon's free hand.

"Bravo! Well done!" came from the crew of the packet, which had come about and stood by to render what help might be needed.

Philpotts, having made sure that his rope had carried, made the other end fast to a cleat, and then as Huntoon passed his end around Neville's body, Philpotts and Peggy drew it in hand over hand, till the two in the water, the swimmer and his burden, were brought close to the boat.

Philpotts leaped into the shallop, brought it round, and together he and Huntoon succeeded in lifting Neville's body into it. Huntoon's teeth were chattering, and his limbs shaking with cold; but he gave no heed to himself.

"An ugly blow!" he muttered, looking at the great round swelling above the temple where the blood was already settling black. "Brandy, Philpotts, quick — from my flask in the cabin!" and falling on his knees in the shallop, he began to chafe Neville's icy hands. At the same time he called aloud to the sailors on the packet to send their small boat to make examination of *The Lady Betty*, to take off the young lady if the

danger were imminent, and to lend a hand at saving the cargo.

He and Philpotts rowed the shallop to the packet, and lifted Neville with the sailors' help to the deck of the larger vessel. Then, and not till then, he looked about for the captain who stood facing him, and behold it was — *Richard Ingle!*

The best gift of the gods is prudence; the next best audacity. Romney Huntoon was handsomely dowered with the latter commodity, and he invoked it now in his awkward predicament. Walking up to Ingle with a smile, he stretched out his hand.

"You and I are quits," he said; "I did you a bad turn yonder at St. Mary's. You have done me a bad turn now by sinking my boat. Shall we wipe the slate and begin again?"

Huntoon's opening was happily chosen. Had he apologized, all would have been lost; but the freebooter was pleased with the boy's boldness. Yet that alone would scarcely have won the day. It was the bright eyes of Peggy Neville that lent a certain civility to his surly voice.

"If I 'd known whose boat we were running down, I 'd never ha' given myself the trouble to come about, for I could ha' seen you go down with her in great comfort; but since ye chanced to have this young lady aboard, I 'm not sorry

things fell out as they did. But that 's as far as I 'll go. And as for your cargo yonder, I warn you that all we save of that goes to Ingle and Company, to make good the damage to *The Reformation.*"

"A bit of paint — " began Huntoon, and then turned his back and stood looking over the rail, watching the death-struggle of *The Lady Betty.* The little vessel rolled first this way and then that, shipping water in her hold at every turn.

There is a solemnity in watching a sinking ship akin to that of standing by a death-bed. As Huntoon looked, a wave of memories swept over him. He recalled the first journey he had taken aboard her, the pride of setting out with his father, the smell of tar on the ropes, as the sailors cast them loose, and the anxious face of his mother as she stood on the pier to wave a farewell. With this thought of his father and mother came the wonder how this disaster would strike them. He dreaded their consternation at the loss, but he felt sure of their sympathy. Blessed is the son who holds to that, let come what may.

Meanwhile, Neville lay on the packet's deck, pale as death, with eyelids closed, and only the faint beating of his heart giving evidence that he still lived. Peggy sat beside him, holding sal volatile to his nostrils. The sailors stood around in a sympathetic circle, their Monmouth caps

doffed, though the winter air was searching. None doubted that they were in the face of death, and the roughest sailor grows reverent in that august presence.

At length, however, the lowered lids quivered and lifted themselves first a crack, then wider and wider till the eyes — those long steel-gray eyes — rested with full recognition on Huntoon and Philpotts. His lips moved, and formed one half-audible word, "St. Mary's!"

Huntoon looked questioningly at Ingle who answered as if he had spoken, —

"No, by the Lord! and any one who suggests turning about for so much as a mile, will be spitted like a pigeon on my sword here and flung into the sea."

"As you will," said Huntoon, coolly. "So far as I know, none has suggested it save this man who is raving in delirium from the cut in his head. For my part, I had far rather he did not get his wish, for we have but just saved him from Brent's clutches."

"How 's that? I thought they were as thick as thieves."

"So they were; but time brings strange revenges. It was after you did set sail that the priest was murdered at St. Gabriel's."

"I 'm right glad to hear of it whenever one of those black crows is put out of the way. No

word of it reached me, though I have been hanging about the river here waiting for cargo."

"That means spying on the land," Huntoon thought to himself, but aloud he said, —

"Well, so it has fallen out, and because he had Neville's knife in his breast, the Governor will have it that it was Neville did the murder. He was hot for punishment, and will be sore angered when he finds his prey has slipped through his fingers."

This was shrewdly spoken. To spite Giles Brent, Ingle would have taken much trouble; but his suspicions were not yet set at rest.

"Then what for should Neville want to go to St. Mary's?"

"'T is a strange affection he hath. You would call it folly; some folks call it honor."

Richard Ingle colored, and Huntoon hastened to change the subject: "Now, Captain Ingle, I have a proposition to make: In regard to the salvage of my cargo belonging to your crew, there might be two opinions; and if you took it without my leave, there might be awkward questions for you to settle when next you come to Virginia; but I 'll agree that you may have it as ferryage if you 'll take us four and our crew to Romney on the York River, which doubtless lies off your course."

"S' let it be!" growled Ingle, adding under

his breath, "Damn the fool! I was going that way anyhow to have talk with Claiborne.

"Turn to, men! Have out the boats, and save what we can from yonder ketch, for by all the signs she will not last half an hour."

Romney had no heart to watch the men at work nor the oars flashing over the water. He turned instead to where Neville lay.

"He 'll catch his death lying here in the cold," he said; "let us carry him below, Philpotts!"

"Ay," said Ingle, carelessly, "ye may lay him in the cabin next mine, and the third and last cabin I 'll have made ready for Mistress Neville. You 're to be queen o' the ship while you 're aboard," he added, turning to Peggy; "and when you land you shall have the salute of five guns I promised you at St. Mary's."

Peggy thanked the Captain with gracious courtesy, but Romney glowered and made as if to speak, then thought better of it, and lifting Neville with the help of Philpotts bore him down into the cabin, where they chafed feet and hands with brandy and wrapped the cold form in hot blankets.

To Huntoon's strained sense it seemed hours, though it was only minutes, before the rapid tread of feet on the deck, the creaking of ropes, and the flapping of sails gave notice that *The Reformation* was once more under way. Hurry-

ing on deck, he was just in time to see *The Lady Betty* rise for the last time on the crest of the wave, and then, with a final shiver, plunge downward in five fathoms of water. Tears rose to his eyes and a ball that seemed as big as an apple stuck in his throat; but he gulped it down and began to pace the deck with a manner as indifferent as he could make it.

"There 's ship's biscuit and hot stuff in the cabin," said Ingle. "You 'd best come below and have some. You look as though you 'd fasted near long enough."

It was the first time the thought of food had crossed Huntoon's mind, but he realized now that it was well on towards nightfall and he had not broken fast since seven in the morning. Yet when he was seated at the table despite his hunger he could scarce eat. Two things choked him: first, the thought of *The Lady Betty* lying on the sand five fathoms under water and her cargo on this pirate's deck; and afterward, when he had conquered this bitterness and looked up, the anger in his heart at sight of the ogling attention Richard Ingle was bestowing upon Peggy Neville.

The girl herself was more than a little frightened, but she held her head high.

"Had I known we were to have a lady aboard, I had had the cabin decorated."

"Bare walls go best with a sad heart, Captain Ingle."

"Fill your goblet again and down with the Madeira!"

"None for me, I thank you."

"Ho! ho! I see you are jealous. Wine and woman, the old saw says, make fools of all men. So belike you care not to take your rival to your heart."

"I crave your permission to withdraw."

"Ah, do those bright eyes feel the weight of sleep so early?"

Peggy bowed.

"Then must we do without them, though 't is like turning out the light in the ship's lantern. Your cabin, you know, lies between your brother's and mine."

"I shall sit with my brother the night."

"And you so overcome with drowsiness," mocked Ingle.

Huntoon started up; but Peggy checked him: "Master Huntoon, will you take me to my brother? I will detain him but a moment, Captain Ingle, and I thank you for your courtesy."

It might have been a court lady who swept past Ingle to take Huntoon's arm; but it was a trembling and much frightened little maid who entered Neville's cabin.

"Will you do something for me?"

"Anything."

"I don't know how to say it."

"I know. You fear Ingle."

"I do."

"And would like to have me sleep outside the door here."

"No; that would make him angry, and we are all in his power."

"I fear you speak only the truth."

"But there is a way."

"What?"

"Keep him talking all night."

"I will try, and, Peggy, if worst comes to worst —"

"I know, and I trust you; but now hasten back."

So he left her.

When Huntoon returned to the table, Ingle poured him out a huge bumper of Madeira and another for himself, though his flushed cheeks and glazed eyes showed that he had little need of more. Then leaving his seat he went to the little locker at the end of the cabin, and drawing out two carefully preserved treasures set them down with a thump on the table.

"Do ye know what those are?"

"Drinking cups," said Huntoon, but he shuddered.

"Ay, drinking cups of a rare make. The

last voyage but one of *The Reformation* we fell in with a ship and would have boarded her peaceably, as the crew were for letting us, but the captain and mate made a fight for it and cost me two of our best men. So angered was I by their obstinacy, I vowed if we won I'd have their skulls made into drinking cups, and here they are with the silver rims round 'em fashioned by a smith on board from a roll of silver on the ship. See, I'll take the captain, and you shall drink from the mate. Now give us a toast."

Huntoon paled and his heart thumped against his ribs, but he kept saying to himself, "Yes, Peggy, I will do it. I promised you, and I must not fail."

At length, grasping the ghastly cup, he raised it and in a voice of strained gayety cried out, —

"Here's to *The Reformation!* She's a gallant vessel, as this day's work has proved."

"Ay, that she is, and fit to gladden the heart of any sailor in Christendom."

"Were you bred to the sea?"

"Not I."

"That's strange. You walk the deck as if you had had sea legs on since you gave up going on all fours."

"Ay, but that comes of natural bent and brains. Give a man brains enough and he can be anything from an admiral to a bishop. Now

there was a time when I had thoughts of being a bishop myself."

"You?"

"Oh, you may smile, and I own there's not much in the cut of my jib to suggest its being made of the cloth, and this ring I wear being taken from the finger of a corpse in a merchantman would scarce do duty for the Episcopal symbol; but for all that I speak truth."

"And what changed your purpose?"

"What always changes a man's purpose? A woman. Here, pass over that Madeira. Do you know, I have more than half a mind to tell you the whole story."

"Should I not feel honored by the confidence?"

"Well you may, for I've never yet told it to any one; but the sight of that girl and you in love with her — oh, never mind coloring up like that. I knew it the moment you set foot on the ship — the sight of you two, I say, brings it all back."

"You were in love once?"

"Ay, that I was, as deep as you or any other fool."

"Was the girl English?"

"Ay, and a tall, straight, handsome girl as ever you saw, in those days, — far handsomer than her sister, who is and always was a weakling, with no more expression than a basin of hasty pudding."

"She is living, then?"

For answer Ingle pointed with his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Kent Fort.

"Here, in Maryland?"

Ingle lurched half way across the table, and putting his hand to the side of his mouth whispered a name.

"No!" exclaimed Huntoon.

"Ay!" then jealously, "Perhaps you think she's too good for me?"

Huntoon thought it prudent to evade the question by another.

"Did you ever tell your love?"

"I tried to, and more than once, but I could never get her to listen. Curse the pride of those Brents!"

"They *are* proud," Huntoon assented.

"Ay, and Margaret proudest of all. Why, when I wrote her she sent back the letter, saying she could not read it for the spelling, and that I would be the better for a twelvemonth more of schooling. And when I spoke to her she bade me shut my mouth. And when I held her wrist and would make her listen, she said I was no gentleman."

"But how were you on the road to a bishop's see? Not surely by writing of misspelled letters and holding of ladies' hands against their wills."

"No, but in spite of it, for I had influence and

the Archbishop was a friend of my father's, and I had his promise of preferment, which was good for its face value in those days, and I might have risen to anything; but when Margaret Brent cast scorn at me like that it maddened me — and what was she to hold herself above me? What are the Calverts themselves? Why, Leonard Calvert's grandfather was a grazier, and Leonard himself was a dolt when we were at school together."

Huntoon, not seeing exactly what answer was expected, wisely attempted none, but made a feint of helping himself from the jug at his elbow, and then shoved it across the table. Ingle shook it and finding it still heavy, set it down with a contented thump.

"Bide you there, my beauty!" he said jovially, "till I'm ready for you. I'll have you yet. Yes, and Margaret Brent too, for all her fine-lady airs. Who ever heard of the Brents till they sprang up like mushrooms in this new world? While the Ingles — my grandfather did oft tell me how all England took its name from them."

"Faith!" said Huntoon to himself, "your spelling is not much improved since the days when you wrote Mistress Brent." Aloud he said, "And did the disappointment drive you out of England, the country named after your forefathers?"

"It did," answered Ingle, with a hiccough, and fell into drunken weeping, "but perhaps I might have lost my head if I 'd tarried, so maybe 't is all for the best, and the life o' the sea is a merry one; but I 've never forgotten nor forgiven, and for Margaret Brent's sake I 've sworn an oath to make a hell of Maryland to all her kith and kin."

With this Ingle came to himself a little and feared the confidences he was making this stranger in his cups might have gone too far, so he burst into tipsy laughter and shook the jug, which was made of leather, and then poured its contents to the last dregs into his silver-rimmed skull, and finally waving it above his head burst out singing, —

"'Oh, a leather bottel we know is good,
Far better than glasses or cans of wood.
And what do you say to the silver flagons fine?
Oh, they shall have no praise of mine,
But I wish in Heaven his soul may dwell
That first devised the leather bottel!'

Huzza for the leather bottel! and huzza for the wine in it! Wine and woman they 're a fine pair; I 'll sing you a song about them — hic!"

Huntoon looked anxiously toward the door behind which Peggy was sitting, and he saw with satisfaction that the carousing Captain had promised more than he could perform, for when he

started to sing his voice failed him, his arm fell at his side, and the whole man collapsed in a heap beneath the table.

"At last," murmured Huntoon, gratefully, "I think he can be trusted to stay where he is till morning," and escaping from the close cabin with its foul-smelling lantern he made his way to the deck.

The fog was gone, and the night stainlessly, brilliantly, radiantly clear. The stars twinkled a frosty greeting to him. The deep, dark blue of the sky calmed and soothed him. He took a dozen turns up and down the deck, then he went below, and stretching himself out before the door of Peggy's cabin fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XVII

ROMNEY

IT was on the afternoon of the day after the collision with *The Lady Betty* that *The Reformation* rounded the last headland that shut Romney from the view. The river ran cobalt blue between its brown banks, bare but for the patches of snow that lay here and there in unsunned hollows. The sky arched above far and clear, save where a group of fleecy clouds bunched together like a flock of white sheep on the horizon.

The sunlight fell full on the western front of Romney as it stood in stalwart bulk against the black forest behind it, its wings outspread on either side like some wild bird sheltering its young. A stout stockade enclosed house and grounds, and ended on either side of the little wharf running out into the river.

In the doorway of the house stood a woman, her hand raised to shelter her eyes as she scanned the river to the southward. Mistress Huntoon was still beautiful, though the radiance of

youth was gone. The pencilled eyebrow and the transparent curve of the delicate nostril, the lambent flame in the eyes, yet remained, and, above all, that indefinable attraction which hovers about some women from the cradle to the grave.

Just now she shivered a little as though she had been standing and looking long. Then she drew closer about her the cloak of gray paduasoy lined with yellow and held by carved clasps of polished marcasite.

"Will he never come?" she murmured. "'T is nigh a week since he was to have reached home, and I cannot help worrying, for all his father laughs and bids me put away womanish fears and remember that the boy is well-nigh come to man's estate and better able than either of us to look after himself. Ah, what's that beyond the headland? A sail, a sail, Humphrey! Do you hear? a sail in the river! It must be Romney's, though it looks over large for *The Lady Betty*."

Her eager words brought her husband to her side, buttoning his doublet close as he shut the door behind him.

"Poor, poor little mother!" he said, as he laid a comforting arm about her shoulder, "we cannot let the lad go beyond the length of her apron string again, if she is to lead me such

a life as this of last week. Why, we have had him die of seven separate deaths already. Let me see," and he began counting soberly on his fingers: "first, drowned in Chesapeake Bay; second, caught by pirates and carried off to the Bermudas; third, languishing in prison, for taking the part of Virginia in one of Master Claiborne's skirmishes between commonwealth and palatinate; fourth, stabbed in the streets of St. Mary's on a dark night and robbed of his gold; fifth, shot in a duel brought on by his hot temper 'so like his father's;' sixth, frozen to death on some lonely Maryland road; or last and worst of all, dead in love with some designing maid, wife, or widow there at St. Mary's and wholly forgetful of his duty to thee and me — ay, sweetheart?"

"Hush, Humphrey! Cease thy jesting and tell me is that *The Lady Betty*, or is it not?"

"Why, no, as I make out, 't is too large for the ketch, deeper built, and with a prow more fit to buffet ocean waves. 'T is more likely a merchant packet plying a regular trade with James City or St. Mary's; but come, let us signal her from the wharf and perhaps we may get some news of Romney."

The wind was blowing cold as they reached the dock, and Huntoon wrapped the gray cloak close about his wife, as they seated themselves

under the shelter of a pile of logs to watch the approaching vessel.

"Dost thou remember, Betty, the day I set sail from James City in *The Red Fox?*"

"Ay, that I do, and I watching thee from the window of the Carys' cottage, with my heart in my throat."

"And I that disappointed I could have cried like a schoolboy, because thou camest not to see me off."

"I dared not."

"If I could only have known that!"

"Poor fool, too dull to ask what thou wast aching to know!"

"Ay, poor fool indeed, and much needless trouble my dulness and diffidence together brought upon me, and on thee too; but in the end all came out right, and I sometimes think we could not have loved each other so well but for all the trials we went through."

For all answer Elizabeth Huntoon slipped her hand into her husband's.

"Yet such inconsistent creatures are we, I own I would not our boy should suffer as I did."

"Never fear; Romney is a lad of spirit, and will never lose a girl for lack of asking."

"Ay, but asking and getting are two different things. There was Captain Spellman. He wooed

thee with as much spirit as any woman could wish."

"The presuming coxcomb!"

"There it is. What is a poor man to do, when asking is presumption, and not asking is dulness?"

"Do? Why, hold his tongue and use his eyes, to be sure."

"But, Betty, thou wert never twice alike."

"So shouldst thou have changed too. When I was hot, thou shouldst have been cold. When I was cold, thou shouldst have turned to a furnace."

"Who loves, fears. I played the fool; but, Betty, 't was the fool who won. Pray Heaven Romney meets as kind a fate."

"But, Humphrey, what can be keeping him?"

"The old refrain; I have heard that question so often I could answer it in my sleep. Thy boy is safe and sound, and will give a good account of his absence, I'll be bound."

For all his light treatment of his wife's terrors, Master Huntoon had his own fears for his son's safety, and realized better than she could the many forms of danger and temptations that beset a home-bred youth, setting out to do business or battle with the world. It was with a glad leap of the heart and a curious catch in his throat that he recognized the stalwart figure by the gunwale as the packet drew near the wharf, though a mo-

ment later he realized that something must have gone wrong with the ketch.

"All's well, Father," cried Romney; which meant, "There's the devil to pay; but I'm alive."

Before the ship had made fast her first hawser, the boy was over its side and in his mother's arms, with one hand held fast in his father's, pouring forth a torrent of words so bewildering that his father finally clapped his hand over his son's mouth, saying, —

"Softly, thou headlong stripling, or thou wilt split our ears in the effort to hear, and our heads trying to take all in. Now let me put the questions, and do thou say 'ay' or 'no,' and as little more as the grace of God lets thee hold thy tongue for. Now, thou didst load at St. Mary's?"

"Ay, sir."

"And cleared in safety?"

"Ay."

"And stopped at St. Gabriel's Manor?"

"Ay."

"What for?"

"How can I say 'ay' or 'no' to that?"

"Then explain more at length; but briefly."

"Prithee let that stand. Suffice it to say a man — a friend of mine — was in mortal peril, and his sister and I resolved to save him."

"*Sister!* Ah, I begin to see a light. Is she with you?"

"Ay, and I have promised her a welcome from thee and my mother fit to heal her sore heart."

"Well, well, we'll come to that later. Now what befell the ketch?"

"Why, the fog befell us first, and then Dick Ingle befell us, and then the devil befell us; but here we are in spite of all three; and, Mother, thou *wilt* be good to her, wilt thou not?"

The crisis had come to Elizabeth Huntoon, as it comes to every mother — gradually to some, suddenly to others — when she realizes that her supreme place is gone forever. Henceforth, for her, affection and esteem and a comfortable suite of dowager apartments in her child's heart; but the absolute sway, the power, the *firstness* at an end.

The blood surged back from Mistress Huntoon's face, leaving it gray, and for the first time with the touch of age upon it, so that one could know how she would look as an old woman.

"Yes; I will be good. Where is she?" The lips formed the words which sounded cold and formal in her own ears; but she saw with a new pang that her son had no leisure for noting subtle shades of tone or meaning in her voice.

"Here, Mother, here!" he exclaimed, turning

to where his father was already assisting Peggy Neville from the deck to the wharf. Now, had Peggy been rosy and dimpling and happy as she was a fortnight ago, and as she must needs have been to arrest the wandering fancy of Romney Huntoon, his mother would have greeted her with as much coolness as Virginia hospitality permitted; but seeing a pale, tearful little face, weary and woe-begone, peeping out from the brown curls, the older woman felt her heart touched by a keen remembrance of herself as a young girl, a stranger in a strange land; and waiting no words of presentation, she made one of her swift, characteristic strides toward Peggy, and folding her arms close about her, kissed her on both cheeks.

"Poor child!" she said in her low caressing voice; "thou art fair tired out and sadly in need of rest. Come with me to the little white chamber next mine; there shalt thou bathe thy face with fresh water and rest thy weary body in a warm bed."

"But my brother — he is very ill —"

"Leave him to my husband, who is counted the best physician in Virginia. He and Romney can do more for him than thou or I. Romney, receive our guests and do what is needful for their comfort! I will join thee shortly in the hall."

"Captain Ingle, will you come ashore and try the quality of Romney cheer?" said Humphrey Huntoon, as his son stood looking like one dazed after the women on the path.

"I thank you; but my time is short, and I must have speech with Master Claiborne, who is staying further up the river."

"Perhaps on your return you will stop and let me try to repay —" began Huntoon, courteously; but the thought of *The Lady Betty's* goods stored in *The Reformation's* hold pricked Ingle's conscience.

"I am already repaid," he answered stiffly, "and there is no call for thanks on either side. Here, you men! Lift Sir Christopher Neville over the railing there. Three of you go to this side; three to that. So! easy there. One — two — three! Now lift!"

To give the devil his due, no man had such a gift as Richard Ingle for giving orders.

It was scarcely quarter of an hour after *The Reformation* touched the wharf before she was away again, leaving four of her passengers and the crew of *The Lady Betty* on the wharf. When she was well out in the river, Ingle ordered a salute of five guns, and then bade his men give three cheers for the Mistress Peggy Neville, the handsomest girl that ever trod the deck of a vessel.

"Here's to her!" he cried himself, "and may she have the luck to marry a buccaneer when yonder stripling is dead and gone!"

Peggy smiled a watery, tearful smile as she heard the five guns. How little, she thought, had she imagined under what circumstances that salute would be fired when Captain Ingle lightly promised it at St. Mary's!

But her hostess would give her no time for thought. She led her swiftly up the winding stair to the little white bedroom, and in a trice she had set black Dinah at work heating the sheets with the great brass warming-pan. Susan was fetching water hot and cold, and she herself was loosening the lacings with which Peggy's own numb fingers fumbled in vain.

All the while she kept her eyes upon the wharf which lay below the window. Already a litter had been improvised of boards that lay on the wharf; four men lifted the figure over the ship's side and laid it down gently. Then the litter was raised and borne toward the house, Romney and his father walking on either side. Once or twice the figure struggled and flung its arms wildly above its head. So violent did the struggles become that at length Master Huntoon drew a phial from his jerkin, and pouring out some drops forced them between the prostrate man's lips. The head fell back, and quiet settled

on the limbs so suddenly that Mistress Huntoon uttered an involuntary exclamation of terror.

Peggy caught her anxiety in a moment.

"What are they doing? Where is he? Oh, not — not dead!"

"Why, no, foolish child," answered Lady Betty, ready to pinch herself for her ill-timed outcry. "Look for thyself. See, they are bearing him up the walk, and they will have him undressed and put to bed in no time. Go thou to rest likewise! I promise to bring thee tidings, should there be need of thee in the sick room, and meanwhile let me sing thee a little song that my mother sang to me in the old country, and I again to Romney here in his babyhood."

Mistress Huntoon watched Peggy closely as she spoke Romney's name, but no answering blush marked her words. The girl was so utterly worn out that she scarcely took any heed of what was passing around her, but sank upon the bed, closed her eyes, and dropped into sweet slumber to the sound of a tender, preoccupied crooning of the old refrain, — the same that Romney had hummed to himself on the hillside path at St. Mary's, —

"Heigh-ho! whether or no,
Kiss me once before you go
Under the trees where the pippins grow."

In her dreams it seemed to Peggy that she was standing on a ladder in an English orchard. Romney was shaking the tree and for every apple that fell claiming a kiss, while she from her vantage ground of the ladder pelted him with the red apples instead.

The dream brought a smile to the pale young lips.

"It is well," said Mistress Huntoon to herself, watching her; "she sleeps and she smiles. Youth will do the rest." After bending an instant over the sleeper she left her and slipped down the staircase into the hall. Romney was walking up and down. At the foot of the stairway he met his mother and kissed her hand, as had been his custom from babyhood. They crossed the hall and sat down side by side on the wide settle before the fire.

Then a silence fell between them.

"Alas," thought the mother, "when did ever my boy find it hard to speak with me before?"

"She suspects something," thought her son.

This was not the truth; she did not suspect, she *knew*.

"Tell me now of all that hath befallen thee since ever *The Lady Betty* touched at St. Mary's."

"Nay, tell me first if thou, like my father, hast forgiven the loss of the dear old boat."

"Speak not of the loss of a boat though it had held half our fortune when thy life was in the scale. Oh, my son, my son!"

The mother covered her face with her hands and fell to weeping, not so much, to tell the truth, because her son might have been lost to her, as because he *had* been.

Romney, shrewd as he thought himself, never dreamed of what was passing in her mind.

"Now then, little Mother, cheer up! What's the use of weeping when thou hast me here safe and sound? As for my adventures, they have in truth been many and wonderful. To begin at the beginning, I found St. Mary's mightily dull till I did make acquaintance with Mistress Neville and her niece who is with us here."

"Neville, so that is her name?"

"Why, of course, Neville, — Peggy Neville," Romney said the name slowly as if it were music in his ears. "'T was at their house, Mother, I met Governor Brent, and he did make particular inquiry for my father, and said the fame of his courage and wisdom was spread beyond the boundaries of Virginia."

This was a good feint on the boy's part and drew his mother's attention for the moment.

"Said he so indeed? Why, 't was right civilly spoke. I trust thou didst return what courtesy thou couldst to the Governor."

"Yes, and no. I did him some small favors; but in the end I robbed him of his prisoner."

"Romney!"

"Ay, that did I, and would do it again. The man was falsely accused."

"Accused of what?"

"Murder."

Elizabeth Huntoon's face fell. She dearly loved the atmosphere of respectability, and had no mind to be mixed up with a felony. Her son paid little heed to her expression.

"Oh, but 't was shrewdly planned, — Peggy and I — "

"Peggy!"

Romney could have bitten his tongue out. The mischief was done. He halted, stammered, and finally resolved to throw himself on his mother's mercy, which he might better have done in the beginning.

"Yes, *Peggy!* — the sweetest name for the sweetest girl in the colonies. When thou dost know her better, Mother, thou wilt say so too."

"Thou dost not seem to have needed long knowledge to find it out; but thou must needs remember that all thou hast told me of her so far is that she is sister to a murderer."

"Mother!" cried Romney, flinging off his mother's hand and jumping up to pace the floor.

"It was thou who didst say the word."

"Not I. Am I like to speak such a foul falsehood of the man I honor most in the world, next to my father! I said *accused* of murder, — a mighty different thing, as any but a woman would know."

It is a great relief to a man to vent upon the sex a charge which courtesy and respect forbid his laying at the door of the individual.

"Perhaps it will be set down to the curiosity of my sex if I venture to ask whom this high-souled gentleman is supposed to have put out of the way."

God gave sarcasm to woman in place of sinewy fists. Poor Romney felt his heart pommelled, but being in the right and knowing it, he kept his temper.

"I 'll tell thee as if thou hadst asked more kindly."

The shot told, for it was deserved.

"Sir Christopher Neville was accused of killing a Jesuit priest, — one of those who dwell at St. Inigo's. The evidence against him was strong, and Giles Brent credited it, though he had great liking for Neville. But his sister is much under the influence of 'those of the Hill,' as the Jesuits are called, and thou thyself, Mother, dost know how much that order is to be trusted."

Cleverly aimed again, Romney! He knew that his mother had come to the greatest griefs

of her life through the machinations of a follower of St. Ignatius; already she weakened a little, though her face did not betray it.

"But why was it necessary that thou shouldst be caught in the toils? Neither deed nor charge was any affair of thine. What was it all to thee?"

"What was it to my father when thou wert in trouble yonder in James City?"

Elizabeth Huntoon trembled.

"Oh, Romney, is it gone so far, in one little fortnight? Remember thy father had known and loved me for years."

"Pshaw!" said Romney, striding up and down faster than ever, crowding his hands deep into the pockets of his jerkin. "Is there any calendar of love with directions, 'On such a day a man may take a liking, after so many days he may admire, at the end of a month, or three, or six, he may give rein to his fancy, and when a year is out he may love, — that is, if his mother gives consent'?"

The lad was growing angry, and therefore letting down his guard. Trust a woman for seeing the advantage and using it! Elizabeth poked her little red boots out to the fire and looked at them as if they interested her more than anything in the world. Then as though the question were the most natural and casual one she asked, —

"When are you to marry?"

It was at once the cruellest and the kindest thing she could have said. A huge sob rose in the boy's throat and choked him. Then he threw himself on his knees and buried his head in his mother's lap, crying, —

"Don't! Don't! She does not love me!"

"Ask her!"

"I have asked her."

Let those who can, explain the workings of a woman's mind. Perhaps they can tell why Elizabeth Huntoon, who five minutes before had set her face like a flint against this love affair, of a sudden whiffed about like a weather-cock and was set for it as if she had planned it herself from the beginning. All she said was, —

"Then why did she ask thy help?"

"She did not; I offered it, — nay, forced it upon her; and for her brother she would do anything. It's my belief he is the only human being she does truly love."

"All the better. Love for a brother never yet blocked the way to any other. But, hark! I hear her stirring. Belike she will be able to come down for supper. Go thou, and don thy scarlet sash and the falling band with lace edge. Oh, and don't forget the lace cuffs and the gold lacings."

"Mother, dost take thy son for a baby or a popinjay?"

"Neither, but for the dullard he is, not to know that dress makes as much difference in men as in women. Why, who knows but I would have had thy father a year earlier, had he paid more heed to his attire! Go! Go!— Suppose thou hadst never come!" Here words failed her, and she caught her son to her heart, cried over him a moment, and then pushed him toward the stairs.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE EMERALD TAG

WITH the dignity of absolute self-renunciation Elinor took up the cramped, new existence in the little cottage at St. Mary's. To Cecil it was but a play, this strange life in the tiny rooms, where the great four-post bed seemed an elephant in a toy house, and the head on the carved chest appeared to be perpetually grinning at the incongruity of its surroundings. What cared the child for narrow quarters, while in the evenings he could lie as of old before the fire, and in sunny spring days could wander through the village streets, now loitering on the wharf to watch the lumber loading for the new house at Cecil Point and anon pausing at the smithy for a talk with the blacksmith as he hammered at his anvil?

For the first time in his life the boy was learning the meaning of democracy. The best gift money can offer its owners is the aloofness afforded by wide acres, and the servants who act as buffers to the multitude; but the eternal laws

of compensation hold here as everywhere, and this aristocratic seclusion is bought at the expense of the feeling of kinship and sympathy with the average man.

Elinor realized this, and it reconciled her to much that was trying in her new lot. She felt that her own life was at an end, the last page turned, and *finis* written on that day when Giles Brent met her on the river path at St. Gabriel's and told her that the waters had closed over the head of Christopher Neville. On that day hope fell dead; but duty lives on after hope has died, and then there was always Cecil.

On him she lavished all her pent-up love, all the unsatisfied ambition of her heart. For him she planned and worked. He was to be Lord of the Manor, then Councillor, then perhaps in the far-off days Governor of the Province, and always an honor to the Calvert name. Already men were at work building the house at Cecil Point, and the wood-chopper's axe rang merrily among the giant trees that must fall to clear the fields and make them ready for their burden of wheat and maize and tobacco.

The superintendence of all this, combined with the keeping of the little house at St. Mary's, filled Elinor's days so full that she had scant time for grieving; but when Cecil was in bed and asleep, and Elinor sat by the fire alone with memory,

then, indeed, the struggle was a bitter one, and often her head was bowed upon the table and the candle-light shone upon a figure shaken by a storm of tears and sobs. Yet each time, after the storm and stress came peace, as she betook herself to her closet and her beads. In nothing has the Catholic faith a stronger hold on men's hearts than in the tie its creed furnishes between the living and the dead, in the belief that the prayers of those who kneel before the altar do still reach forth to help and succor those who lie beneath the pavements of the church.

Elinor, too, had her private liturgy addressed to Christopher, which she recited as the bells tolled the hours of devotion. At matins she said, —

"May the coming day grant me opportunity to serve thee and honor thy name!"

At prime: "May thine innocence dawn upon those who doubt thee as the glory of the morning rises on the world of shadows!"

At vespers: "So ends another day which did separate thee and me."

And at complines: "I lay me down to sleep. May our souls meet in the world of dreams here and the world of spirits hereafter!"

Elinor never spoke to Father White of Neville, for she knew full well that to the priest he was accursed as a heretic if not as a murderer, and she

felt that she could only talk of him with one who held him as she did.

Often in these lonely days did her heart yearn toward Peggy, who was known at St. Mary's to have been rescued from the ketch and to have made her home with the Huntoons; but something within her, whether pride or penance, forbade. She remembered the scorn in Peggy's voice as she reproached her with her doubts of Christopher, and she felt how idle it would be now to try to persuade the girl that her faith was as strong as her own. Some day, she told herself, when her prayer had been answered, her struggles rewarded, and she had shown forth Christopher's innocence to the world, then she would write in tender triumph and bid Peggy come to her and be her little sister for life.

The chief comfort of all to her troubled soul lay in this task she had set herself as her life-work, — the proving to the world of Neville's innocence. Baffled at every turn, she never gave up, but followed every hint of a clue and rejoiced to find here and there men and women who believed in Neville as earnestly as she.

Of all these friends in need, one was more helpful, more comforting, more sustaining than all the rest. Margaret Brent was like a granite cliff against which the waves beat mightily, but could not prevail. Had her nature sharp peaks,

crevasses, and unsunned slopes? In times of storm one thought not of these, but of the rock's protection and the solid barrier against the fury of the tempest. The very bluntness of her shrewd comments on Elinor's conduct of life held a certain tonic. The people who help us most are those who make light of our achievements, and have faith in our possibilities.

As Elinor compared Margaret with her sister Mary, she felt how unenlightened her former judgments had been. Mary Brent's virtues were for times of sunshine. Hospitality, tranquillity, pious observances, marked her placid progress through the world; but when the final test came, it laid bare under these qualities narrowness of mind and bigotry of soul and that hardness which sometimes underlies suavity. Her white eyelids, with their light lashes, never quivered as she pronounced Neville guilty and bade Elinor renounce him and his memory. Elinor would not? Then they were best apart, and she would not undertake to dissuade her cousin from her plan of taking up her abode at Cecil Point. When she bade Cecil good-bye, a brief spasm seemed to tear her heart; but it passed, leaving the face as unruffled as ever, and it was with a feeling of relief that Elinor turned from her to the wilderness.

At first sight the cottage at St. Mary's had seemed impossible for one of Elinor Calvert's

birth and upbringing; but outward things had no power to trouble her now, and she set to work with a certain sense of pleasurable independence to brighten the little house for Cecil's sake.

Her chief helper was Bride, an old nurse of Cecil's who had come to the new land with her boy and who now proved herself as reliable in the kitchen as in the nursery. She was a picturesque figure enough in her short stuff gown with bright stockings and heavy shoes, a white kerchief folded above her checked apron, and a ruffled cap covering her gray hair.

Her only wish was to serve her mistress, her only joy to prepare good things for Cecil to eat, her only terror fear of these strange blacks whom people seemed to take into their houses as if they were human beings like the white folk, instead of uncanny creatures of whom any deviltry might be expected.

"Do ye think, Master Cecil, the black would come off if ye touched one?" she asked.

"I know not; I never tried. Come here, Lysander! There, stand still while I rub you with this white cloth. See, Bride, the cloth is not black, no more than if you rubbed it on a black cow or any other beast."

"Ay, it's beasts they are, and not men at all, and it's none of them I be wanting about my kitchen. Let them bring water from the well

and leave it at the door, and then be off out of my sight before one of them casts the evil eye on me. And the females are worse than the males; they 're like black witches."

"Bride!"

"Ay, my bairn!"

"Ye remember the murder of Father Mohl?"

"Am I like to forget it?"

"Well, I've been thinking 't was not like a man to kill a priest like that. Do you think it might have been a black witch that was riding through the forest on a broomstick, and did it with a witch knife, — you know they have them that they copy from real ones."

"What's this talk of witches and witch knives?" It was Ralph Ingle who spoke. He stood leaning against the door, his hair falling light against his suit of huntsman's green with leather trimmings, in his hands a string of wild ducks.

"Oh, Master Ingle!" cried Cecil, jumping up and down and clapping his hands, "you have been shooting again and when, oh, when will you take me with you as you did promise?"

"When Mistress Neville grants her gracious permission; and, Cecil, do you think ever you could gain her consent to another thing?"

"What thing?"

"To her accepting me as a tenant at Cecil Point."

Cecil shook his yellow curls and set his mouth in droll imitation of his mother's determined look.

"Cannot be! Mother says we shall never have a tenant at the Point."

"Not till the sea gives up its dead," said Elinor, coming to the door and laying her arm about Cecil's shoulder.

At Mistress Calvert's approach Ingle bent forward with that unconscious deference which is the most subtle flattery, as though the soul stood at attention before its superior.

"Say no more, I pray you," said Elinor, "though I know you do speak but out of kindness and deep thoughtfulness for me. You have been hunting," she added, striving to turn the conversation.

"Ay, and have brought the spoils to lay at your feet," adding under his breath, "where my heart still lies."

Elinor colored and shook her head, but, feeling that refusal were ungracious, she took the ducks from his hand, stroked the plumage, and bade Cecil carry them to Bride.

Ingle watched Cecil disappear with the birds over his arm, then he leaned across the door near Elinor.

"You are more beautiful than ever," he said.

"I have outgrown the age of flatteries, Master

Ingle. Beauty belongs to youth and joy, and both have left me forever."

"One type of beauty belongs to these. At St. Gabriel's yonder you were beautiful like a great lady of the court. To-day you are beautiful like the Blessed Virgin."

"Hush! You speak something akin to blasphemy."

"Nay, not a whit. Did not the old masters paint Our Lady from the women around them, and none so fair as you?"

"A pretty model for a sacred figure I should make, with my homespun apron and a bunch of keys in my hand."

"They might be the keys of Heaven if the hand were in mine."

"Master Ingle, I have told you more than once that I could listen to no such talk from you."

"Your word is law," said Ingle, bowing low. Then with a swift turn of the tide of talk, "I must tell you how narrow an escape these ducks had from becoming food for some dirty red man instead of lying in state on your table. I shot them on the river a day or two since. Father White asked me to go with him as interpreter on a mission among the Patuxents. We took a boat and two chests, one containing clothing along with bread and butter and cheese and corn, and

another containing bottles of wine for the eucharist and holy water for baptism. But in the night the savages broke into the tent where that dolt of a servant slept, and stole the sacramental wine and our chest of clothing and all the food save one pat of butter and a cheese-cake.

"Father White was so pleased that the sacred vessels were untouched that he fell on his knees, giving thanks as though the whole affair were a great mercy; and for me, to tell the truth, when I found the ducks I did shoot for you were still there, I heeded no other loss."

Elinor came nearer to a smile than the last month had witnessed. There was consolation in knowing that there was still some one to whom she was first, whose only thought was the gratification of her tastes and fancies.

"They are in the nick of time," she said, "to garnish our supper to-night, when I do expect my cousin, Margaret Brent, who comes to spend some time under my roof. Perhaps you will join us."

"Thanks, fair hostess; but Mistress Margaret Brent and I agree not as well as I and her brother and sister. Besides, I did promise the Governor to be back this night at St. Gabriel's."

"Master Ingle?"

"Yes, Cecil."

"Will you pass by the road where Father Mohl was murdered?"

Ingle started. He loved not ghostly thoughts nor sad memories.

"Not I," he said hastily; "but by the main road."

"I am sorry."

"Why?"

"I wanted so much to have you look in the branches of the tree and see if by chance you saw any scrap of cloth that did look like the cloaking of a witch."

"Hush, Cecil!" cried Elinor, clasping her hands over the boy's mouth. "Drop no hint that might spread another calumny. We who are suffering from that dread scourge should see to it that we lay not the lash to the back of another. Whoever the guilty one is, we must leave him to God, and I believe in my heart his suffering is greater than mine, or than any that ever Christopher Neville knew."

"Think you all souls are as sensitive as thine?" asked Ingle, gazing with reverence into the face so near and yet so infinitely far away.

"I know not; but I can conceive no nature so base that it would not writhe to see its just censure borne by another; and to be so sunk in sin as to feel nothing, — why, that would be most pitiable of all."

"It would," answered Ingle, and stood musing a moment; then he moved slowly away, walking

backward that he might keep Elinor in view till the last. "Good-bye," he said finally, and turning strode hastily toward the gate nearest St. Gabriel's.

Elinor stood long in the doorway gazing after him, and then when he had quite vanished, gazing on into vacancy like one who sees the unseen and holds converse with spirits.

"Come, Cecil," she said at last, shaking off her lethargy with an effort, "fetch a pitcher, and we will go down to the Governor's Spring and draw water fresher than that which flows in our well."

Nothing loath, Cecil slipped one hand in his mother's and with the other swung the earthen pitcher to and fro, to the imminent risk of its brown nose.

When they reached the spring the two seated themselves on the stone curb with which by Calvert's orders the spring had been walled about. From the gravelly bank above, a group of tiny rivulets tumbled over each other in a laughing cascade. Held for a moment in the stone basin, they wandered onward to water the dell shaded by its thick growth of sycamores, elms, and holly-trees.

Spring was misting all the foliage with green, not the rich verdure of summer, but a tender yellow, deepening here and there into the full green glory of unfolded leaves.

Cecil leaned far over the curb, and laughed at his reflection in the spring.

"Do thou lean too, Mother, with thy cheek near mine, that I may thee if thou dotht in truth look ath much like me ath folk say."

As he spoke Cecil gave a little tug at his mother's sleeve and drew her to the margin, where she too stooped and looked down smiling at the golden curls and rosy cheeks of her boy looking up at her from the water.

An instant later she caught another reflection, the face of a red man peering from the bushes over her shoulder. With an inward start she realized that they were on a by-path and beyond call of help.

"Come, Cecil," she cried, striving to speak lightly, though she was conscious that her voice shook. "Pick up thy pitcher, for we must be going. Make haste, too, lest Cousin Margaret be at the house before us."

"Nay, Mother, 't ith tho fair beautiful here," began Cecil, turning toward his mother with pleading in his voice.

As he turned, his eyes too caught the Indian's face even as it was withdrawn into the shadow.

"Why, 't is the same native I did see on the wharf —"

"Never mind, Cecil, who or what it is, but make good speed for home and I will follow. There, give me the pitcher. Now, run!"

They reached the cottage door panting and out

of breath just as Margaret Brent was dismounting from her donkey.

Elinor ran on still faster to greet her. It was the first time they had met since the midnight mass at St. Gabriel's. The older woman took her in her arms.

"So you could not go on living with Mary? Neither could I. She is a good woman, better belike than either you or I, yet — well, different. And when she has once made her decision, angels and archangels could not move her. Never mind, we must win the fight without her."

"Oh, Margaret, do you think there is any ray of light?"

"Foolish child, waste no energy in wondering when light will come; but stumble on in the darkness as best you may. I have several scouts from Kent Fort scouring the trail between St. Mary's and St. Gabriel's. So far they have met with little success, except for one trifle, — one tiny straw, — yet it may show the set of the wind."

"What? Oh, what?"

"Why, Master Halfehead found by the side of the path, on the low bough of a bush not ten paces from where the priest's body hung, the tag of a point such as men use to lace hose and breeches together. It had a bit of the green point hanging to it still."

"But any might have worn that."

"Not such a tag as this. It was made of wrought gold and had an emerald brilliant set at the tip's end. That tiny green gem must be our guiding star."

"But how to follow it?"

"Listen! where there is one point there are two, and each point has two tags; therefore, somewhere in this province, there must be three tags of wrought gold with a tiny emerald at the tip. It is our business to find them."

"But if we find them, what then? Master Huntoon or Giles Brent or one of your scouts might have dropped this."

"Nay, I 'd stake my life that if we find the tag we find the murderer —"

"What gives you such assurance?"

"Why, 't is clear as day. The point was of stout ribbon, somewhat broader than the ordinary lacing. Now that could have been torn off only by some one running and not without the knowledge of the runner. Being of some value, it was well worth picking up or going back to search for, unless the runner had some reason for haste which made him willing to sacrifice the tag rather than stay to look for it."

"Oh, Margaret, how many shrewd ideas thou hast! Would I had a tithe of them!"

"Ideas come with wrinkles, my dear, and are bought at a cost of years beyond their value. As

for shrewdness, 't is a mean virtue at best, and not to be compared with warmth of heart like thine, that draws all toward thee like bees to the red clover. Yet shrewdness has its value. Therefore am I now full of interest in talk of points and lacings with every man I meet, and I leave not off the subject till I have learned with what manner of points the man and his brothers and his cousins and his wife's relatives do lace together hose and breeches. There, that is the whole of my budget of news."

"And thou art an angel to bring it; but having still some human nature, thou must needs eat, and Bride has set out the table with our best linen in honor of thy coming, and has cooked some rare ducks which Master Ingle did bring to the door this morning."

"Does Ralph Ingle come here often?"

"Why, yes and no. Never to stay long, yet often in going and coming for a brief converse at the door."

"Dost thou like him?"

"Faith, Margaret, I think I have no place in my heart warm enough for liking, save of old friends; but Cecil is overjoyed to see him, and Father White oft sends him here of an errand."

"'T is easy to see why."

"Yes, thou art shrewd as ever, Margaret. Father White would be glad to see me wed

now that he has returned to the bosom of Holy Church after long wandering. He accompanies the Father on his missions, and renders much service as interpreter. Ingle himself has given up all thought of marriage, but would fain be our true friend, and asked me this morning to consider of him as a tenant at Cecil Manor."

"Be thine own tenant, Cousin. Trust me, 't is safer."

"Ay, so I think, and so I have decided. I am very ignorant, but the manor cannot be ready for habitation till next year, and ere a year is over I hope to learn much."

"And I will help thee. Count upon me. Ah, Cecil, how fares it with thee?"

"I do well, Couthin Margaret, yet I like not St. Mary's as well as St. Gabriel's, and in the summer 't will be worth."

"In the summer thou and thy mother are to come to me at Kent Island. What fine breeches thou dost wear, Cecil!"

"Ay, they are my best, and donned for thee."

"And with such pretty points, knowst thou any other that wears points as fine?"

"Why, Couthin Giles hath points of azure silk with tags of silver, and Counthillor Neale wears rich ribbon points tipped with crystal, and the other day I saw an Indian, and on his blanket was fastened a single point of green silk, and —

what think you? — the tag was of wrought gold with an emerald in the end. It made me laugh to see it worn like that. Oh, and, Mother, 't was the same Indian we saw to-day in the butheth by the Governor's Spring. 'T wath that I strove to tell thee, but thou wouldtht not hear."

The two women looked at each other and turned pale.

"This Indian — who was he — did ever you see him before?"

"Nay, 't was on the wharf, and he was selling tobacco and shells; none knew him, for I asked."

"Margaret, oh, Margaret, surely now we have found the guilty man."

"Not so fast, Elinor! The Indian got that point of a white man. The question is, was it before or after the murder."

The smile faded out of Elinor Calvert's face and she drew a deep sigh.

"Only another blind lead," she murmured.

"Only another link in the chain," said Margaret. "Be of good cheer. You and I are not women to fail in an undertaking into which we have put our whole hearts. Depend upon it, we shall trace the owner of the emerald tag yet."

CHAPTER XIX

THE ROLLING YEAR

"IS he better to-day?"

"Better in body; but for the mind I can see little betterment."

Elizabeth sighed at her husband's words. Months had gone by since Christopher Neville was borne into the house on his litter. Winter had thawed into spring, spring had bourgeoned and bloomed itself into summer, and summer had dropped its green mantle and taken on the dusky sadness of autumn with its intervals of Indian summer's hazy glory, and now winter was here again. Not last year's icy winter with the cruel chill of the north bearing down on the unpreparedness of the south; but a genial, soft, out-of-doors winter with roses blooming to deck the burial of the old year and welcome the birth of the new, to hearten the struggling and revive the sick.

"Surely," they said, "this weather must put new life into Neville."

It was only in the inner circle that they named him. To the outer world he was "the guest," or when need was, "Master John." Often when alone Huntoon asked himself what would happen if Brent caught wind of Neville's being alive, and made requisition upon Berkeley for his return. It would make an awkward entanglement, Huntoon admitted; but he vowed to himself that there should be a stiff fight before the prisoner was taken from Romney, and those who knew Huntoon's character and the look of his upper lip would have been slow to undertake the capture.

In the first months under the doctor's skilful treatment, the invalid had gained rapidly, and the household rejoiced. Then Nature cried a halt. The color came back to the pallid cheeks, strength to the limbs, but the old light in the eyes never returned. A lassitude marked all motions. A gentle thoughtfulness showed itself in word and deed; but they were as the words and deeds of a child dealing with the present alone. The blow from the bowsprit or the shock of the water or both together, falling on nerves so terribly overwrought, had unseated reason and dethroned memory, at least made a gap which the wandering mind was powerless to fill.

Neville dwelt much in the world of his childhood, fancied himself riding along English lanes, and pulling briar and eglantine in the valleys of

Surrey and Somerset with Peggy by his side. Then his imagination led to a beautiful golden-haired girl who went robed in green holding herself like some stately palm.

He remembered watching her walking over close-cropped lawn, and dancing galliards on polished floors. It seemed to him that he had loved her in that strange far away world, and he could recall vaguely a pang of regret when he heard that she was married. Then a blank and nothing more till he found himself here in this hospitable home, with Peggy still beside him ministering to him without ceasing, and the circle of friendly faces about. He knew neither curiosity nor sadness. It was well with him, and he asked nothing but to stay as he was.

"That is the worst of the case," said Master Huntoon to his wife. "If Neville were discontented or unhappy, it would show that there was some half-conscious memory at work in his mind; as it is, I have little hope. And such a man! Faith, Brent must have been mad to believe anything evil of that broad, open brow. I have seen many criminals in my time, Betty, and I know the look of them; but there is another look — the look of a man who might commit a crime if the motive were strong enough — I know that too; and then there is yet another face that God keeps for the man who is to play a man's

part in the world, to do and dare and bear bravely the worst Fate can lay upon him, and that is the face of Christopher Neville."

"Alas that his mind should have died before the body!"

"Nay, Betty, let us not give it up so easily. Memory may be gone and judgment even, and yet the vital spark linger. Thought is the breath of the soul. While that lasts there is life, and Christopher's thought is as beautiful and as pure as the heaven above us."

"Ay, that 's God's truth."

"More than that, I have seen in him now and then a glimpse of recognition of earth as though the soul were shaking off its lethargy. Were the real world a less sad one for him, I might be tempted to try to call him back by mention of the Brents or Mistress Calvert."

"Oh, that woman!" exclaimed Elizabeth; "not a word from her in all these weeks."

"You forget. She counts him dead."

"Ay, but she might have written to Peggy."

"Yet when Peggy's aunt wrote it did not suit thee."

"I should say not. Such a letter! It was as well Christopher was dead, since he had brought such disgrace on the name, but Peggy might come back to her if she chose. Oh, but it was good to see the answer Peggy sent, and how she

scorned aid or protection from any that doubted her brother's innocence."

"Perhaps Mistress Calvert feared a like rebuff, for she and Peggy did not part in love. Besides, thou must not forget that she has much to contend with. She is a Catholic and under the tutelage of Jesuit priests."

"'T is well I know what *their* influence is. If I were Lord Baltimore, I would harry them all out of the province."

"Ay, but thou art not Lord Baltimore nor called upon for the Christian task of harrying out of the land a band of brave men."

"Thou dost defend them?"

"Nay, there be few things in which they and I think alike; but this I do say: There is no chapter in her history to which the Church has better right to point with pride than this work of the Jesuits here in the West. At privations they have smiled, at danger they have laughed, at torture they have stretched out hands of blessing over their torturers. And who are they who have faced all these things for their religion? Not hardy pioneers full of love of adventure like many of our Virginia cavaliers, but delicately nurtured students, men for the chief part who prefer the cloister to the world, but have cheerfully sought these western wilds, moved only by love of God and man."

" Humphrey, thou dost love to argue, but answer me one question, Dost thou put trust in them ? "

Huntoon shrugged his shoulders.

" Why, for the matter of that," he said, " the older I grow, the fewer men do I put full trust in. But, Betty, there is something else I have to talk of with thee."

" Ay," said his wife, laying down the purse she was netting, " and what is that ? "

" Faith, I scarce like to speak of it lest it vex thee."

" The sooner I hear it, the less 't will keep me on the rack."

" Why, then, I do suspect that Romney is in love."

" Verily ! "

" Ay, verily, verily. At the first I thought 't was but a boyish softness ; but I have watched him close of late, and I fear it is a man's passion."

" Oh, mayhap 't is thy fancy leads thee on to imagine all this. Romney is tougher than thou mayst credit. He can see a pretty face — ay, even for a year — and not lose his heart."

" But, Betty — "

" Well ! "

" What if the maid lose hers with looking at him ? He is a well-favored lad."

" Ay, he hath the look and bearing of the

Romneys. But what hath put this fancy in thy head?"

"Oh, I have looked and listened and I am very swift to take in such things, swifter than thou, I dare venture; oft would I have spoken to thee of the matter ere this, but feared to stir lest thou take it too hard."

"Good Master Blind-as-a-Bat, once before I called thee by that name, and thou hast got no better eyes since. I have known this wondrous news of thine these twelve months more or less."

"And never told me?"

"Oft would I have spoken," answered Elizabeth, mockingly, "but feared lest thou take it too hard."

"The same old Betty!" cried Humphrey Huntoon, laughing, yet a trifle vexed, for the most amiable of men loves not to be made a jest of. "But there must be some deeper reason why thou shouldst have held thy peace on a matter touching us both so nearly. Faith, thou art like the fish Walton tells of, that closeth its mouth in August and openeth not till spring."

"Why, Humphrey, 't was the first night of the Nevilles' coming, Romney did make a clean breast of his love for Peggy, and the next day we talked of it again. He told me all, — how he had asked her to marry him and got no answer; that is, none that suited him, for he swore she cared no

more for him than for any gallant of St. Mary's save as he had befriended her brother; 'but, Mother,' he said, 'I spoke with her since she came to Romney and told her the matter was not to be opened for a year, that we were both too young, and meanwhile we were to be friends, and if she made any show of not being at ease with me, I would take myself off for the whole year, and that would be a great grief to you and my father.'"

"Ah!" said her husband, "the boy has the blood of the Huntoons in him. 'T was spoken like a man, and Peggy — what said she?"

"She said nothing, only stretched out both hands and looked up at him in a way she has which would make a man in love with her that was cold before, and make her lover ready to live or die for another like it. Ever since they have been fast friends, though 't is to thee rather than Romney she shows favor, and 't is well I am a woman above jealousy."

While they were talking Neville entered.

"Is it not a pity, my good host, to be shut indoors when the sunshine lies on the river bank and the air is like mellow wine?"

"Hast thou spent the morning in the open?"

"Ay, Romney and I and Peggy have been sitting by the river bank. We made wreaths for her while she bound our wrists with withes and

laughed to see us struggle with them. I did break mine full easily; but Romney could not for his life till Peggy did herself undo them."

"Where did you leave the two?" asked Elizabeth.

"They came up from the river with me, but turned in at the barn where the spinning-wheel stands. There! I ought not to have told, for Peggy was fain to surprise thee with a great skein of smooth flax."

"She is more like to surprise me with a knotted skein, and a snarl on the spindle that will take a week to unwind. Never was there such a careless, heedless, captivating being."

"Since the days of Elizabeth Romney," said Huntoon, who would listen to no word spoken in detraction of Peggy. His wife smiled and thrust out her chin at him.

"I must go and try if it be yet too late to rescue the poor wheel," she said, and passed out at the door and down the path which led to the barn.

At the entrance of the barn she paused and stood looking in at the picture which the doorway framed. Leaning against the rough wall stood Romney, his fingers idly sweeping the strings of a lute, while his eyes were fixed upon Peggy as she sat by the flax-wheel in the corner. Her little foot pressed the treadle, her round arms

swayed this way and that with the moving skein, and her supple fingers hovered over distaff and spindle.

The last year had left time's mark on the young man. In youth these marks are generally an improvement, and before thirty, the years add more than they take away. It was hard to define the change which the passing months had brought to Romney, but where a year ago the passing stranger saw the lingering boyhood, to-day he marked the coming manhood. The mouth shut closer, the brows drew a little together as if set in a purpose known only to themselves. If the smile were rarer, it was also sweeter, for it had learned to show itself only when another smile appeared to call it forth. Just now it was playing freely about his lips as he watched the figure at the wheel.

When two are alone together, and a third is present, his name is Love. Peggy's mood was merry, and her mouth had lost for the time the wistful sadness that had hung round it ever since her coming to Virginia. Now it curved into the old-time dimples at the corner as she tossed back and forth the refrain of an old song of which Romney, in teasing humor, had begun the first verse. He sang to the music of his lute and she to the accompaniment of her whirring wheel.

With a mocking smile he thrummed and sang:

"'Pray, what are women like unto?
Believe me, and I'll tell you true:
Wine, wine, women and wine,
They are alike in rain or shine.'"

Peggy bridled, and Romney, still smiling, went on, —

"'Woman's a witch who plies her charm
As doth the wine to work man harm,
And when she sees his heart is sore,
She smiles and sparkles all the more.'"

Peggy dropped her lashes, leaned a bit more over the wheel till the curls shaded the round of her cheek as she took up the word, —

"'It is not woman is the wine,
But love, but love, oh, sweetheart mine!
Drink deep, and drinking thou shalt prove
How heart'ning is the draught of love.'

Is 't not a silly verse?"

"Peggy! 'T is a year last week since thou didst come to Romney."

"Ay —"

"And then we did forswear all talk of love for a twelvemonth. But the twelvemonth is ended. May I talk of it now?"

Peggy colored rose-red.

"Dost know what manner of thing love is?"

Peggy looked up but sidewise, and so looking took in a glimpse of Mistress Huntoon, and she ran to her as to a refuge.

"Come, thou dear hostess," she said, drawing her in at the wide door, "thou art just in time to answer a question of thy son's, 'What manner of thing is love?'"

Elizabeth Huntoon colored almost as red as Peggy had done but now. It was as though the question had turned back life's dial-point and her youth was before her again. She saw Humphrey bending over her in the window-seat at James City. She could recall the trembling of his fingers as they fastened her necklace. She could almost hear again the beating of her own heart. So real did all this seem that she stood stock still with her finger on her lips, like a statue of Memory, smiling to its own image in the past.

"Love!" she said at last, rousing herself, "why, I am fain to think the beauty of love is that none can describe it because it is different to each soul; nay, that it is different each hour to the same soul."

"Does it bring happiness?"

"In that it is like life, — brilliant as a field of poppies one day, sad as a grove of yew-trees the next."

"But how can one tell when one is — is in love?"

"Because when one is — is in love," mocked Elizabeth, "Love tells one."

"Wert thou *sure?*"

"Nay, I was of the blow hot, blow cold sort. When Humphrey shunned me, I fell a-dying for him; but when he sat casting sheep's eyes at me, I yawned in his face. I wanted to own him; yet I had no yearning to bear bonds myself. But sometimes storms clear the air better than sunshine; and when we met at the gate of death, as it seemed, in the massacre at Flower da Hundred yonder, I knew that in life or death he was mine and I his."

"Master Huntoon," cried Peggy, turning to Romney with a merry eye but a trembling lip, "thinkst, then, thou couldst get up a massacre? 'T is evident nothing less will show a woman what manner of thing love is! Yet that would not serve either, for in such like times 't is only the great things of life that we heed. If I could keep thee for such, thou wouldst suit me to the Queen's taste, but oh dear me! life is made up of such little things! When thou dost trip over the root of a tree, I hate thee for thy clumsiness; when thou dost turn a compliment, I long to take it from thy lips and say it to myself, — I know so well what manner of speech a girl would like."

"And I what answer a man would go on his knees for."

"Ah, there thou art again. When thou didst kneel, I saw thee first dust the floor with thy kerchief."

"I never did, Peggy, I swear I never did, though I had on my peach-blow breeches and blue hose."

"Well, 'twas as bad, for thou didst look as if to see where the dust was least. Oh, I could scarce help bursting into laughter."

"The devil!" exclaimed poor Romney, looking toward his mother with despair in his eyes, but his mother only smiled.

"Tell me, thou dear, wise Mistress Huntoon, can a woman truly love and yet be fain to laugh at herself and her love and her lover?"

"Some women can, Peggy, women like thee and me; and, truth to tell, I believe their laughing love is as well worth having as the sighs of those who must pull a long face and grow pale and go about solemnly breathing out prayers and poems; but if thou wilt have my judgment in thy case, little one, I think thou art as one who uses the beads of a rosary to play marbles before the world, yet in the closet will string them once more and murmur Pater Nosters and Ave Marias as piously as any nun.

"Never mind! By and by thou wilt make a little shrine for them and they will grow more sacred, and then little by little thou wilt forget that thou couldst once laugh and make merry over them. Kiss me and say, dost not feel it so?"

No answer.

"But Romney must wait patiently for the stringing of the beads and the building of the shrine, and not try to bless the rosary till the play is over. As for thee, Peggy, trouble not thy head over the future, and for the present cease to twitch at that skein which thou art snarling past all hope of disentangling."

"How stupid of me! and I was going to make it such a lovely skein for a surprise," and Peggy's nervous fingers began to work with the refractory thread.

"I came to talk of lighter things when I was drawn into this discourse of love," said Elizabeth. "I wanted to tell thee, Peggy, of a plan we have for a day not far off when this graceless boy of ours comes to man's estate. If we were at home in England we should keep this twenty-first birthday of his with state and ceremony, but here in the wilds our festivities must needs be primitive. We have thought of a barbecue in the forest for the tenants and a dance in the house for the friends and neighbors. For a dance, folk twenty miles away count themselves neighbors."

"A dance!" Peggy's eyes lighted and then fell with a sudden sadness upon her black dress. Romney's glance followed hers and he said quietly,—

"Let us not attempt it, Mother. We are none of us in the mood."

"Perhaps we all need it the more on that account. Even to the world Peggy's year of mourning is over, and there will be less questioning if she takes her place in the world once more; and among ourselves, where it is a question of Christopher, surely the best service we can do him is to bring what gayety of heart we can into his life."

"You speak wisdom, Mistress Huntoon; but your words bring home to me something I have often of late wished to speak of with you. I — we — cannot longer trench upon even your inexhaustible hospitality."

"Hush!" said Elizabeth, interrupting her with the quick impulsive tears starting to her eyes. "Little Peggy, it has been the one drop of sadness in our cup that we have had no daughter. Now we happen to have taken a fancy to you, though you do snarl flax. Nay, never blush and look at Romney; it is a daughter we want, though she be not our son's wife. We love you for yourself, and we love Christopher for himself. So speak no word further of parting, but rather play the daughter of the house and help me in planning the dance."

"Oh, may I really? Do you think I ought?"

"I do indeed think you both may and ought.

It is more than any one woman can undertake alone. I must go into the house at once to begin."

"And I will follow as soon as this is unsnarled," said Peggy.

"And I will wait to practise kneeling to the Queen's taste," said Romney, with a look which brought a surge of red to Peggy's cheek.

"Heigh-ho!" sighed his mother as she walked toward the house, "it is one thing to sigh for the moon; another to get it."

CHAPTER XX

A BIRTHNIGHT BALL

IT was the evening of Romney's dance. Lights blazed from every window of the Huntoon mansion, and outside the moon hung her yellow lantern in honor of the merry-making.

Already the guests were gathering. At the wharf lay a flock of white-sailed boats, billing together like a covey of friendly swans. Around the door huddled a motley group of men and boys, holding the bridle of horse and donkey, and in the midst, the centre of observation, stood the lumbering yellow coach with a crest on the panel of its door, the state carriage of the Governor of the province and used only on occasions of ceremony.

On the shore, in front of the house, a great bonfire flamed up, a beacon that could be seen far out on the river. Above the fire stretched two parallel bars supported on forked stakes. On one of the bars hung a huge moose figuring in place of the ox that would have adorned a

barbecue in England. On the other bar hung a string of wild birds, duck, heron, and bittern, alternating with raccoon, squirrel, and possum. On the ground around the fire sat a throng of Indians and negroes interspersed with white servants, eagerly watching the game hissing on the spit. In the centre, Philpotts crouched, resting on his heels and holding out his hands to the cheerful blaze.

"I tell you, Cupid," he said, turning to a negro seated beside him, "this is a sight for sore eyes, yet would I give more than all, if one I wot of could get the good of it with the rest of us."

Cupid answered by raising his eyebrows in question and jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of a lighted window against which Neville's figure was outlined.

"Ay," answered Philpotts, as if he had spoken, "it 's my master I was thinking of. It 's my very life I 'd give to see him himself again. You did never see such a man as he was in his prime, Cupid, and that 's not long since. My brother knew him when he was little more than a boy, and he says he was the bravest and the blithest lad in all the shire of Somerset. But he fell in love, Cupid. He fell in love, and that 's how all a man's troubles begin."

Cupid grinned so widely that all his shining

row of white teeth showed against the blackness of his face like a row of candles.

"Massa Romney he no tink so. See!"

Following Cupid's eyes, Philpotts saw Master Romney standing on the terrace below the little white bedroom, and flinging roses against the window, from which Peggy was leaning and laughingly dodging the flowers as they struck.

"Come down, mistress mine. Thou art late, and the company is half gathered already."

"Go away, then, and do not break my window, and then leave me to thy mother's reproof."

With the words she shut to the casement and flung down a rose which had landed on the sill. Romney stooped, picked it up, kissed it, and thrust it into the breast of his coat.

Philpotts and Cupid looked at each other and burst into a shout of laughter.

"Come, Cupid, we must in and help about the horses. Youth will be youth, and fools will fall in love while the world lasts."

Within the house the girls were hastily donning their finery, shaking out their skirts, and making ready to flutter down to the foot of the stairway where their escorts awaited them, while such of the men as had ridden made use of the time to unloop the tails of their coats, prudently fastened back for their ride over forest trails.

"Girls, have any of you seen this Maryland

maid who is staying with Mistress Huntoon?" asked Mistress Nancy Lynch, as they came down the stair, buttoning their gloves.

"Why," answered Polly Claiborne, "once I caught a glimpse of her standing on the terrace with Romney. I thought no great things of her. She was too brown, and but for a pretty trick of the eyes she had no claims."

"Yet they say at the chapel of ease the parson can scarce go on with the service for gazing on her, and when in the litany he comes to 'Have mercy upon us' he looks straight at her in the Huntoon pew."

"Well, there is one lucky thing, all the men are dead set against Maryland now. I dare say the poor thing will have scarce a partner at the ball."

"You would not care to dance with a girl from Maryland, would you, Captain Snow?" said Mistress Polly, leaning over the railing to where the young officer stood smoothing back his cuffs.

"Not while Virginia holds her own as she does to-night. You have promised me the first reel, remember. Faith! 't is as fine a hall as ever I saw for dancing."

"Ay, that it is!" echoed Nancy Lynch, and straightway the whole bevy of girls and men fell to echoing the praises of the house, and voting it the finest in the province, next to the Governor's.

On the outside Romney was but a settler's house, noteworthy only in size and fine proportion; within, it was an English mansion, for all the furnishings of Romney Hall in Devonshire had been brought over and placed as nearly as possible in their relative position in the new house.

Chairs and tables of black carved oak stood about. On the south side of the great hall hung a tapestry worked by the maids of Mary of Scotland in her captivity; in the corner stood a great bronze vase, wrought by a famous Florentine of an earlier day. Over the mantel breast scowled a portrait of Sir William Romney, and opposite him his wife smiled down, as if she wished she were alive, and could take part in the festive scene in the hall, lighted by the many candelabra and sconces and the hissing, sparkling, high-flaming fire on the broad hearth.

The portrait bore a striking resemblance to the hostess, who stood under it in her gown of silver brocade over yellow satin, receiving her guests with that graciousness which made each one believe himself the one most desired, where all were welcome. Each girl felt that now *she* had come, the ball was sure to be a success; each man, that it was upon *him* Mistress Huntoon counted as her chief aid.

Just now she was listening with an air of

absorbed interest to the talk of Sir William Berkeley, who dispensed his compliments upon just and unjust alike. True to the cavalier ideal, his theme was always "lovely woman." If the particular woman with whom he was talking was lovely she must like to be told so, if not, she must like it all the more.

In the case of Elizabeth Huntoon the strain upon his conscience was less than usual, and if she smiled at his elaborate flatteries, it was only after his back was turned.

"I trust, Madam," he was saying, "that I am to be favored with this white hand in the first measure — that is, if no other partner has been selected by the queen of the ball."

"Where the Governor asks there can be no other," answered Elizabeth, sweeping her best courtesy; "but I am only queen dowager to-night, and Your Excellency must honor some of the rising beauties by asking of them in the dance."

"Ay, after you," he said, tapping his gold snuff-box; "but when one is looking upon the sun, one has no mind to be put off with satellites." Then, breaking off and looking toward the staircase, he exclaimed, "In the name of Venus and Cupid, who is *that?*"

Following his eyes Elizabeth saw naughty Peggy, who should have been ready an hour ago,

coming slowly down the winding stair, her figure showing lithe and erect against the oak panelling, her head thrown back, her nostrils dilated with the elation of a race-horse coming in sight of the grand stand.

For the last year she had drooped into a Yorkshire rose, but to-night she glowed in full Lancastrian splendor. Her cheeks were flushed with carnation, her lips redder still, and her eyes flashing with a sense of untried power and latent consciousness of crescent beauty. She was like a young empress looking down upon a roomful of men destined to be her subjects, though as yet they knew it not.

The girls looked up at her and instinctively fell to arranging their lovelocks, and wondering if they had not abandoned the mirror prematurely. The men looked up and straightway forgot themselves and their partners, or wondered only how soon they could civilly be rid of them.

"That girl not a beauty!" whispered Nancy reproachfully to Polly. "Why, then, where 's the use of being beautiful. Look at the men!"

In truth, it was as if the company had seen a comet. All faces were turned upward, all eyes upon that figure which came slowly down the stair with as calm an assurance as if her life had been spent in courts.

"This satellite," said Elizabeth, with amused

emphasis on the word, and drawing the girl toward her as she spoke, "is Mistress Peggy Neville, Your Excellency."

"I had never thought of her having a name," said the Governor, bowing low, "unless, indeed, it were Flora or Proserpine, or some of those goddesses who appeared now and then to man in old days to show him what goddesses were like. May I hope that Flora will tread the pavan with me later?"

Peggy blushed rosier than ever and courtesied to the ground. The twanging of the fiddles was in her ears celestial music, the candles were the lights of paradise, and *this* was life.

"Good-evening, Sir William!"

"Ah! Huntoon, I have not seen you since my return from England."

"How did you leave affairs there?"

"Badly enough. His Majesty is hard pressed. I urged upon him a temporary withdrawal to his dominions on this side of the water, and if things go much worse with him I believe he may consider of it."

"Come, gentlemen," broke in Elizabeth, "the fiddles are tuned, and the young people cannot brook waiting while you settle the fate of the nation."

In truth, to one little maid it did seem as though the dancing would never begin. What

was the fun of having men struggle for the privilege of talking with her? Old ladies could talk. She could talk better at forty-eight than at eighteen; but to *dance*, to sway to the music, and feel the blood keeping time as it swept along; to promenade down the hall with all eyes fixed upon one; to wheel the gallants in the reel and feel the lingering pressure of fingers reluctant to let go their transient grasp; to feel the light of the candles reflected in one's eyes and the perfume of roses caught in her breath; to live and move and reign the princess of love, — this was the glorious privilege of youth and womanhood, the guerdon which kind Fate in atonement for many hard blows had flung at the feet of Peggy Neville.

At last the march began, — Sir William and Mistress Huntoon leading, the master of the house following with Lady Berkeley; and when Romney held out his hand to Peggy, she was glad to be alive. As she looked down at her gown she experienced that satisfaction which the young knights of old knew in donning their maiden armor, for is not dress the armor of the social battle?

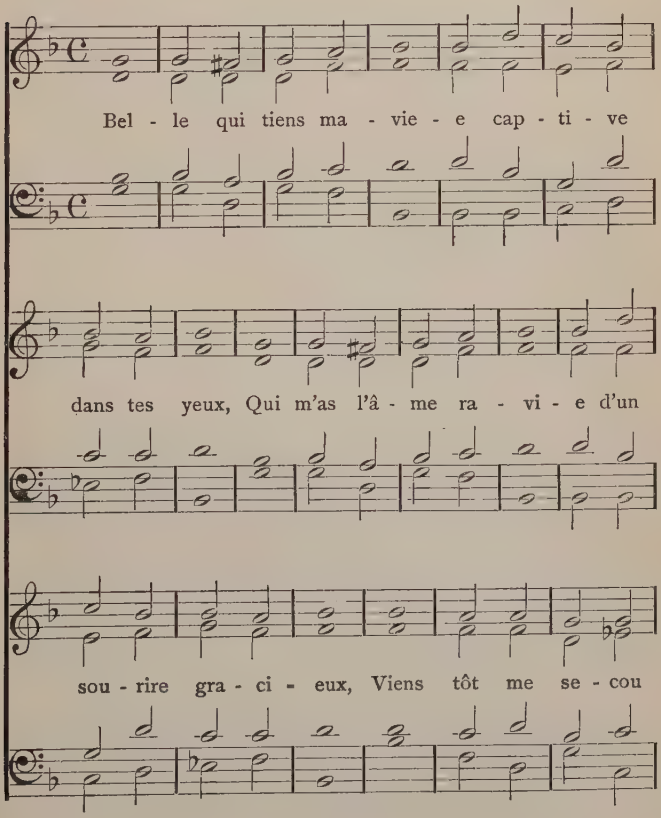
Never in her short life of eighteen years had Peggy Neville looked as lovely as she did to-night. Never had her eyes been so bright, never her cheeks so red, never had Romney felt

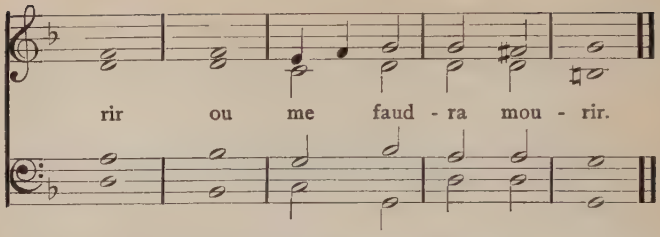
himself so helplessly her slave, and, alas! the poor boy thought, never had she looked so indifferently upon him.

It would not perhaps have encouraged the lad to know that instead of thinking of him with indifference, she simply was not thinking of him at all, her entire attention being fixed upon the scene around her and the actors in it. Such beautiful girls, in their jewels and laces and brocades and high-heeled slippers! Such magnificent men, with rainbow colors in sashes and velvet coats, with ruffles of costly embroideries and buckles reflecting the light of the candles! Most gorgeous of all, Sir William Berkeley!

It quite took Peggy's breath away when this elegant courtier bowed before her and begged her hand for the pavan. Yet there he was, sweeping the floor before her with the white plumes of his hat and craving the honor of the dance. Whatever might be thought of Sir William's powers of governing, there could be no doubt that he understood the art of dancing, and, final test of skill, of making his partner dance well. Holding the tips of Peggy's fingers lightly, but firmly, he led her to the head of the hall, where the host and hostess stood. These they saluted gravely, she with a deep courtesy, he with an equally deep bow, his hat clasped to his heart. Then sweeping down the room they paused again

before the portrait of the King, and Berkeley saluted with his sword; then on again, the hautboys keeping time while the company marked the rhythm by singing together, after the fashion introduced by Queen Henrietta's French courtiers —





At the end of the measure, the advance being ended, the retreat began, the Governor walking behind and leading his partner backward, always with delicately held finger-tips, the raised arm and rounded wrist showing every graceful curve as the girl walked.

"Where did she learn it," wondered Romney, "and she never at Court?"

For Peggy the most trying period in the ordeal was when she was left standing alone while her cavalier, with gliding steps and deep bows, retreated to the centre of the room, where, sweeping a grave circle with his rapier, he faced about and again advanced toward her with the proud peacock-motion that gave the dance its name. At first she had not the courage to look up to his face at all, but kept her eyes fixed upon the scarlet cross-bands embroidered with gold across his breast and the jewel-studded hilt of his rapier.

Apparently His Excellency found the view of her eyelashes and lowered lids unsatisfactory, for as they paced down the room between the rows

of gallants he compelled her to look up by asking how she liked Virginia.

"Virginia much, but Virginians more," she answered.

"That is doubly a compliment, coming from a dweller across the border," said the Governor, with a smile. "For our part, whatever quarrels we may have with the men of your province, we are forced to lower our swords before its women. Beauty is the David who slays his tens of thousands, where strength, like Saul, counts its thousands only. It is not every one," he added, with a look which older men permit themselves and call impertinence in a youth, — "it is not every one who can move in a ball-room as if it were her birthright to be admired."

"Thank you," said Peggy, and then blushed crimson. "What a dolt I am," she thought; "as if he meant me!"

To cover her confusion she fixed her eyes upon a soldierly man at the head of the room.

"Can you, who know every one, tell me," she asked, "who is the cavalier who dances with an abstracted air, as though his thoughts were fixed on serious subjects, and his mind only permitted his body to dance on condition that it made no demand on his attention?"

"Ah, you mean Councillor Claiborne."

"Not Master William Claiborne?"

"Why not?"

"Why — why —" stammered Peggy, "I thought he would look like a cut-throat or a pirate."

The Governor laughed so loud that every one turned and wondered what the girl talking with him could have said that was so mightily clever, and thus her blunder did the new-comer more good in social repute than the finest wit.

"So the Maryland picture of poor Claiborne supplies him with all the attributes of the devil, except the horns and hoof? And you would never have known him as different from half the worthies here to-night. Well, I 'll tell you privately what Master William Claiborne really is, — a good friend, an able secretary of the Council, and a damned obstinate enemy. When Baltimore undertook to oust him from Kent Island he might better have thrust his hand into a nest of live wasps. Ah, what? Our turn again. Why, young lady, your talk is so beguiling I had quite lost myself."

Peggy smiled behind her fan at the Governor's notion that it was she who had done the talking. She wished — she did wish Christopher could have heard him say it, though. But Christopher, when she begged him to be present at the dance, had shaken his head and answered that he should not know how to carry himself at a ball. Peggy,

remembering her mother's stories of Christopher at court, and how Queen Henrietta had asked to have him presented to her as the finest gallant at Buckingham Palace, had fallen to crying then. Even now, following her little vanity came a great rush of pity and tenderness that brought the quick tears, and made her glad when the dance was ended, and Sir William, bowing low over her hand, led her to her seat with a kiss.

"Uncle William has resigned her at last," said the Governor's niece, who was talking with Romney in a corner under the musician's balcony. "Do you admire her as much as the other men do?"

"*Her?*" asked Romney, with a fine show of indifference.

"Mistress Neville, I mean, that they all talk of as if nothing like her was ever seen before."

"Do they?"

"Ay, Master Lawrence says she lights the hall more than all the candles, while Colonel Payne says that her dancing is poetry and her talk is music."

"Indeed!"

"Ay, and Captain Snow is worst of all, for he follows her about with his eyes opened twice as big as usual, lest he lose a single glance. If you doubt me, look at Polly Claiborne, who thought she had him safely landed for a husband,

and now sees him drifting in the tow of another bark. She is furious."

"She looks calm enough."

"In the face, yes, but look at her hands; they are wringing that unlucky lace kerchief as if 't were her rival's neck. But you have not said what you think of this paragon."

"I was looking at you."

"*Toward* me, not *at* me, and ever and anon your eyes took a holiday and wandered off to the Beauty. Oh, it is fine to be a Beauty with a capital letter. Yet I think really it is more her manner that charms than her looks. She has the air of being so pleased with each man she meets, and so more than pleased that he finds pleasure in looking at her."

"She does."

"It looks like vanity. Say you not so?"

"It surely does — like coquetry, which is the very essence of vanity."

"'T is well she hears you not."

"I will go over now, and you shall see me tell her so," Romney said, as a man joined them.

"It was a shrewd device; but it fails to deceive me," thought his companion. "He is in love, and he is jealous."

"It is like the days at old Romney Hall, is it not, sweetheart?" said the master of the house, standing beside his wife, as they watched the lines

of men and maidens gliding down the length of the room, their gorgeous brocades and glistening jewels reflected as in a mirror in the polished floor.

"Ay," answered Elizabeth, "and the county of Devon could not show more pretty faces than are here to-night. Nancy Lynch is a beauty, and Kitty Lee has the loveliest crinkly hair."

"But Peggy is the queen of the ball," said Huntoon, with a satisfied nod. "See the saucy baggage smiling at her own reflection in the glass."

"I fear she is vain."

"No doubt, being pretty, and a woman."

"She is neglecting Romney."

"But is she not having a fine time! I vow it makes my slow, old blood dance to watch her."

"But it is Romney's dance, and he enjoys it not."

"And if the boy wants the moon, this being his birthnight, his mother must get it for him. See, Peggy is throwing a rose at Romney. It hit him squarely in the breast and she is smiling at him."

"Stupid!" said Elizabeth. "Why does he not ask her for the galliard?"

"He has; see how glum the others look. Call you that hospitality, to keep the best for himself?"

"Oh, the others were best occupied in talking with the girls. But no, they must hang about looking at Peggy, as though the sun rose and set over her shoulder."

Yet Elizabeth smiled.

Meanwhile Peggy, having had her fill of admiration, turned gracious and bethought herself of the other damsels. She would fain have persuaded some of her superfluous partners to betake themselves across the hall to where Polly Claiborne was sitting in solitude against the settle; but such curious creatures are men, that they prefer to hover on the frigid rim of the outermost circle of success rather than to bask in the welcoming smiles of the neglected.

One held Peggy's fan, another her kerchief, a third her roses, the ones Romney had gathered for her this afternoon, and now viewed with wrath, seeing them picked to pieces by the idle fingers of young Captain Richard Snow, who, having won a place in the inner line by her side, showed a determination not to abandon it before supper.

"Never before did I know that the Huntoons were selfish!" he was murmuring.

"That they could never be!" ejaculated Peggy, with anger in her voice.

"Yet they have kept you to themselves for a whole year, you that should have shone like the sun over all Virginia."

"Poor Virginia!" mocked Peggy; "she has indeed been sadly cheated."

"You need not shine long to warm the prov-

ince," said a second gallant, "since you have melted Snow in a single evening."

"Ah," answered Peggy, "snow in this part of the world never stays long, but," with a side glance under her lashes, "it is lovely while it lasts;" then catching too a self-satisfied smile upon the Captain's face, she added pertly, "but somewhat soft."

The Captain colored and glowered at his rival. "It is a misfortune," he said, stiffly, "to have a name that lends itself to jests."

"Oh," said Peggy, feeling that she had taken a liberty and anxious to make amends, "I do admire your name much."

"Really!"

"Really and truly."

"You have only to take it; I assure you it is quite at your service."

At this a shout of laughter went up from the circle of men about.

"What is the jest?" asked Romney, joining the group from which he had been vainly striving to abstract his eyes and interest.

"Why, an offer of marriage from Snow, which Mistress Neville has not yet answered."

Romney showed his vexation by tapping with his foot on the floor and biting his lip.

"Yes," added another, "we are all waiting eagerly to try our own chance."

"I am sorry," said Romney, stiffly, "to cut short your lottery, but my mother has sent me to conduct Mistress Neville to the supper-table, and begs that you gentlemen will find partners."

Peggy, knowing that she was not behaving well, was incensed with Romney for showing that he knew it too.

"The hero of a birthnight is no more to be denied than the King himself," she said, turning for a last smile at her court. Then as soon as they were out of hearing, "Romney, what *is* the matter? Have I a black smooch on my nose, or did I talk too much or laugh too loud that you look so — so — so righteously disapproving?"

"If you are satisfied with your conduct I shall not presume to disapprove."

"If I *were* satisfied with my conduct I should not care a halfpenny whether you disapproved or not. It 's just because I am not satisfied in the least that it makes me so vexed that you do presume to disapprove. See you not why I cannot bear to have you think ill of me?"

Romney's heart beat thick and fast.

"Why, Peggy? Will you not tell me why?"

"Because if you do your mother will, and then I should have only your father for my friend, and by and by — perhaps — who knows? — he would give me up too."

Romney's spirits, which had risen to boiling

point at her question, sank to freezing at her answer. The lights seemed to fade out of the hundred candles and leave the hall gloomy; he heard the fiddles scraping out the tune of "Oil of Barley," and he hated the music ever after. In silence he stalked on to the door of the supper-room. Within was a merry din of talk and laughter.

"Come, Peggy," said the hostess, "I was looking for you. We are waiting for you to cut the birthday cakes. Good friends all," she continued, turning to the company, "we have here two birthday cakes, and in each lies hid one half of a gimmal ring, which, as you know, is made of two rings that do fit together to form one. On the man's ring is inscribed '*to get*,' and on the maid's, '*her*,' and being united they read '*together*.' Come, Peggy, cut and choose first lot for the maid's ring!"

Amid much shouting and laughter the lots were cast, and when it was found that the lucky numbers had been drawn by Mistress Neville and Captain Snow, all the company save one found the result vastly diverting. The Captain fastened his half conspicuously over his breast, and Peggy mischievously slipped hers upon the marriage finger.

Humphrey Huntoon, seeing the gathering cloud on Romney's brow, filled a goblet from the

great punch-bowl which stood in the centre of the table flanked by candelabra bearing twenty candles each.

"A toast, my boy! a toast!" he called out, and under his breath he murmured, "Forget not that to-night you are host first and lover afterward."

Romney colored but took the goblet, raised it and said, bowing to all corners of the room, —

"To my guests, one and all!"

"I give you 'The Ladies of Virginia!'" called Colonel Payne.

"Here's to Maryland! Confusion to her men, but long life to her women!" It was Claiborne who spoke, and Captain Snow capped the toast by clinking his new ring against his goblet and crying, "I drink to HER!"

Peggy, seeing Romney's face darken again, took her courage in both hands and with it her goblet, which she lifted, saying in a soft voice which could yet be heard over all the room, —

"To Master and Mistress Huntoon, the kindest hostess and the noblest host, and —" here she stretched out her hand to Romney, "to the hero of the night, the best comrade in the world!"

A chorus of "Long life to them all!" greeted the toast, and the goblets clinked merrily; but to Romney it might have been water or wine or poison they were drinking, for all he knew or cared.

At last, when supper was ended Sir William Berkeley rose in his place, and with a solemnity quite different from his jovial manner of the evening hitherto he said, "One last toast, and we will, if you please, drink it standing. The King, God bless him!"

Fifty men sprang to their feet, fifty goblets flashed in air. Then utter silence fell. It was as if the shadow of the scaffold at Whitehall already cast its gloom over the loyal hearts of the colonial cavaliers.

The guests broke up into little groups of two and three and wandered back to the dancing-hall, where the fiddles were still working away for dear life at the strains of "The Jovial Beggar" and "Joan's Ale is New." The long lines of reel and brantle formed again, and the dancers refused to give over their merry-making till the gray dawn came peeping in at the window, turning the yellow candlelight to an insignificant glimmer, and hinting of the approaching day and its humdrum duties.

As the guests, one by one, came up to bid their hosts a good-night, which might more appropriately have been a good-morning, Master Claiborne drew Huntoon aside a moment, asking, —

"Will you be at home to-morrow — I mean to-day?"

"Ay."

"Then I may come to see you?"

"Why not stay now, since 't is already day?"

"Because there be others I must see first, but I will be back before noon."

"And I glad as always to see you, but too sleepy, I fear, to give heed to any business."

"Then get your sleep before, for it is business of moment touching which we need your aid and counsel."

Before Huntoon could answer, another guest claimed his attention, and he followed to the door to help the ladies, who had donned their hoods and safeguards, to mount their horses or embark in the boats.

As they rode or sailed away into the gray dawn, Peggy, wrapped in her red cloak, stood with Romney watching them from the porch.

"It has been *such* a beautiful ball!" she sighed.

"You think so?"

"Of course I do; but then, you see, I never saw a real, big ball before. Do you think they are all like that?"

"To girls like you, yes, and I suppose to men like me."

"But there are so few men like you."

Romney's eyes looked a question.

"So persistent and so jealous and so — dear —"

With this Peggy pulled the ring off her finger and, tossing it lightly toward the lad, whispered, —

"Catch! and keep it if you can! It is my birthday gift."

"I take the dare and I take the gift, and I will yet take something else. So there, Peggy!"

But ere he had finished she had vanished up the stairway and the ball was over.

CHAPTER XXI

A ROOTED SORROW

BEFORE the last guest had taken his departure from Romney the red sun came bobbing up across the river and shot his rays in at the window.

There is a sarcastic common-sense about the morning sun on such occasions. "Was it all worth while?" he seems to ask. "Consider the labor of preparation, the rushing about of the servants, the hours that my lady spent before her mirror with patch and powder-puff, the effort my fine gentleman expended upon his ruffles and falling bands. Then the occasion itself, the weary feet that trod the measure long after the toilsome pleasure had ceased to please, the lips that murmured sentiment knowing it was nonsense, the eyes that reversed the old moral maxim and strove to beam and not to see — Reflect upon all these and then sum up the aftermath, — the disordered rooms, the guttering candles, the faded flowers, the regretted vows, the heavy

eyelids, the aching heads. Now, was it all worth while?"

The answer of the overnight revellers would doubtless depend chiefly on age and temperament. Young men and maidens would reply that it was none of the sun's business; that he had never been at a ball, and did not know what he was talking about, and for themselves they preferred to reserve their confidences for the sympathetic moon, who, being so much younger than the sun, could better understand youthful experiences and emotions.

Certainly that is what Romney Huntoon would have said. The commonplace day annoyed him. His mood was too sentimental for its searching light. He had slept little, and now at near noon hung about the foot of the stairway wondering at what time it would occur to Mistress Margaret Neville to come down.

When she did appear disappointment was in store for him. She seemed to have forgotten wholly that little scene on the terrace, and when he held out his hand with her ring, that blessed little ring upon it, she only courtesied and asked if his mother were yet down stairs.

At breakfast it was little better: she raved over Colonel Theophilus Payne, praised the bearing of Councillor Claiborne, said how she doted upon army men, commended the curls of one cavalier

and the bearing of another, — all as if no such youth as Romney Huntoon had ever crossed her path.

Romney avowed his intention of spending the afternoon in his boat on the river. Peggy thought it an excellent plan, and purposed retiring to her room unless Mistress Huntoon had need of her.

Mistress Huntoon had *no* need of her. In fact, in reviewing last night's events she felt that Peggy had treated her son rather badly, and she was inclined to make the culprit feel it, too. It must be admitted that justice is never so unrelenting as when Rhadamanthus has been up overnight. On another occasion excuses might have been found for the girl, but this morning she was pronounced unquestionably vain and presumably heartless, — in short, Elizabeth Huntoon was out of temper.

It was not much better with her husband. He was uneasy over the approaching visit of William Claiborne, and annoyed with himself that he had not had the wit to devise an excuse. He knew well Claiborne's insubordinate temper, and had no mind to be drawn into any of his schemes.

Peggy alone worked away at her stitching in exasperating content. At length Romney could bear it no longer. He rose, thrust his hands

into his pockets and rushed out, opening the door with his head as he went, like a goat butting a wall.

Peggy smiled, and the smile brought a frown to the face of her hostess.

"Romney is not over well this morning, I fear," said his mother.

"I thought he was not behaving well — I mean not behaving as if he were well."

"He hath much to try him."

"That is hard to believe, in this beautiful home and with thee for a mother."

Elizabeth tapped the floor with her slipper.

"'T were well for young men if a mother's love sufficed them."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Humphrey, roused from his abstraction by the tilt between the two women. "Faith, good wife, I felt the need of another love than my mother's, and I look not to see Romney more filial than I."

"Oh, you may make a jest of me," began Elizabeth, stiffly; but there was a catch in her voice which led Peggy to throw down her netting, and run across the room to kneel beside her. "*I* need a mother's love more than any," she whispered.

Elizabeth's anger weakened.

"Tell me where Romney has gone and I will follow and strive to make my peace."

For answer Mistress Huntoon pointed through the window to where Romney sat on the edge of the wharf vexing the placid breast of the York River by a volley of pebbles, flipped between his thumb and forefinger.

As the boy sat thus idly occupied, his hand full of pebbles, his head full of bitter thoughts, his heart of a curious numbness, he felt a light touch on his shoulder, but he did not turn.

"Master Huntoon!"

No answer.

"Romney!"

"Ay."

"Of what art thou thinking?"

"Nothing."

"And what dost thou think of when thou art thinking of nothing?"

"A woman's promise."

"Hath some woman promised thee aught and failed thee?"

"Ay, it comes to the same thing. Eyes may speak promises as well as lips."

"Oh, yes, eyes may say a great deal, especially when they are angry eyes and look out from under drawn brows. I should scarce think any maid would dare wed a man with eyes that could look black when their color by nature is blue."

Clever Peggy to shift the ground of attack! Silly Romney to fall into the trap!

"I am not angry."

"Yes you are, and have been all the morning in a temper. I felt quite sorry for your mother, she was so shamed by it."

"What said she?"

"Oh, that you were not well, which is what mothers always say when their son's actions do them no credit."

"If my temper did me no credit, who drove me to it?"

Peggy raised her eyebrows, puckered her pretty lips, and looked straight up into the sky as if striving to solve a riddle.

"For my life I cannot guess," she said at last, "unless — unless it was that wretched woman who broke her promise."

"Thou hast keen insight for one of thy years."

"Then it was she!"

"It was no other."

"Tell me her name, that I may go to her and denounce her to her face."

"Strangers know her as Mistress Margaret Neville. To her friends she is plain Peggy. Now denounce her to her face if thou wilt."

Tripping to the edge of the bank, the girl bent over till she could catch the reflection of her curls and dancing eyes in the water.

"Plain Peggy," she said, shaking her finger at the image below with a wicked smile, "you

must be a bad baggage. It seems you have broken your promise to marry a gentleman here, and such a perfect gentleman! he says so himself, — one who never gets angry, never butts with his head at doors, never shames his mother. Why, plain Peggy, you must be a fool to lose such a chance; but since you have thrown away such a treasure, I trust you will meet the punishment you do deserve, and that he will go away and never — *never* — NEVER speak — to you again!"

With this Peggy turned sharply on her heel, burning with curiosity to see the effect of her words. Poor, discomfited little maiden! Romney had withdrawn to the edge of the wharf, and there, close beside her, with his horse's bridle over his arm, stood Councillor Claiborne.

With no attempt at salutation Peggy clapped her hands over her burning cheeks, and ran, yes, ignominiously ran, toward the house. At the door she met Mistress Huntoon. "Councillor Claiborne is — is — coming," she stammered breathlessly.

"Why didst thou not stay to speak with him?" But Peggy attempted no answer, only fled on indoors.

When Humphrey had been left alone, by Peggy's exit to the wharf and his wife's withdrawal to the offices, his thoughts turned with

renewed irritation to Claiborne, till Christopher's entrance shed its usual benison of tranquillity. The glimpse of the ball which Neville had caught from over the stairway had lingered in his mind as a charming vision. The lights cheered him, and the music had lulled him to sweet slumber, from which he had wakened at peace with the world, yet with a haze of the Indian-summer sadness over the serenity.

After breakfast, Neville and Huntoon sat by the open door smoking their pipes in that social silence so dear to men, so difficult to women.

"Neville," said his host at length, breaking the long quiet, "you look better to-day than at any time since you came to Romney."

"Oh, I am well enough."

"Your tone hath somewhat of discouragement in it."

"I do feel a certain sadness of late, as if I were ever grasping for something I could not see, much less reach. It doth often seem to me that I and you and all of us here at Romney are shut out from the world by a wall of fog, not dark, because it is ofttimes flooded by sunlight, but heavy, dense, dull. It is like a thick curtain with vague distances in it, like the distances between the sun and the earth, and through these spaces float familiar scenes and faces, and all the while I feel that if I could grasp one word it would

prove a clue to guide me through the spaces from one scene to another; but the word — a name, I think it is — will not come, and when I think on it too hard I seem to hear an echo murmuring 'Far away, far away.' Then the whole vision fades, and I come back to you and Mistress Huntoon and the rest; and yet it is as if only half of me came back, and half were still wandering through these vague, gray spaces of mist, following the name. Think you I shall ever find it?"

Touched to the quick, Huntoon opened his lips to speak. "Is the name — "

At that point his attention was caught by a stranger's voice outside the door saying, "I am surprised to see you abroad so early after last night's mighty merry dance, Mistress Huntoon."

"I am honored that you found it so merry, Councillor," said Elizabeth.

"Ay, all counted it the most brilliant festivity yet given in Virginia, and as for the young Maryland beauty, she has turned the heads of half the cavaliers in York County."

"Some heads are set on pivots, and turn to each new face," answered Elizabeth, irritably conscious that Romney and Peggy were both within hearing.

"Perhaps, but many of these heads will find some difficulty in turning another way. Captain

Snow raved all the way home over her charms, and Colonel Payne swore her coming had gone far to do away with his grudge toward Maryland; and by the way, the name reminds me that I came to see your husband on a matter of somewhat urgent business. Is he within?"

"I left him in the hall," Elizabeth replied, leading the way back to the house, and turning back after she had waved the new-comer to enter.

"Good-morning, Master Huntoon!"

"Ah, Claiborne, you look as though you had had even less sleep than I."

"I do suspect 't is true, for I have been in the saddle since dawn."

"You must have pressing affairs on hand."

"Most pressing, and it is concerning them that I am come to consult with you privately."

A certain emphasis on the last word caused Huntoon to glance toward Neville, who was scrutinizing the inside of his pipe, and had scarcely noted the stranger's entrance.

"Go on," said Huntoon, "it is quite safe. I 'll be warrant for the close mouth of my friend here. Besides," here he drew back behind Neville, and tapped his forehead significantly, "he is a stranger here, and neither cares nor knows anything of our entanglements."

"Then, Master Huntoon, I will make a clean

breast of the matter that brought me hither. You are a Virginian, and a man of honor."

"Certainly the former, and I have some hopes of the latter."

"Then join us in our effort to wrest away the land which the perfidious Calverts have stolen under guise of royal grant from the Commonwealth."

"'Stolen' is a strong word, Councillor."

"Not too strong to fit the occasion. Was not the license to trade with the natives along the Maryland shore granted to me by the government of Virginia, and afterward by the King himself?"

"It was."

"Was it not under authority of Virginia that I made a settlement at Kent Island?"

"Yes, but—"

"Did not Kent belong to Virginia by right of a charter antedating the patent of that upstart, Calvert?"

"The Commissioners in England decided differently."

"Ay, of course wire-pulling will always move the wires."

Huntoon's only response was a non-commital smile.

"You may remember, Councillor Huntoon, that this same question came before the Virginia

Council ten years ago, that I did ask the opinion of that honorable body as to whether I should yield to Baltimore's claims. The board answered that they wondered how any such question could be asked, that they knew no reason why they should give up their rights in the Isle of Kent more than any other formerly granted to Virginia by His Majesty's patent, and that I was in duty bound to maintain the rights and privileges of our colony."

"But that was before the decision of the Commission."

"Ay, but that goes for nothing. 'T was unjust, unfair, and should be unrecognized."

"Who are concerned in your present plan?" asked Huntoon.

"Half the planters along the river."

"And who is to be the leader?"

"I believe they look to me; but I shall not be alone in the responsibility. My friend, Captain Ingle, is already anchored in the bay with his ship *The Reformation*."

"Richard Ingle?"

"The same, and a gallant spark he is. Last winter Governor Brent had him tossed on to his vessel like a bag of grain, and the ship ordered off in mad haste as though she had the plague aboard. Ingle swore revenge then; but matters were in too ticklish a stage at home 'twixt King

and Parliament to admit of his proceeding too fast. Now things are clearer, and he has come back with ammunition, armed with letters of marque from Parliament, and purposes to make hot work in more senses than one at St. Mary's."

Neville stopped playing with his pipe and brushed his hand across his forehead.

"Then what you purpose is an immediate raid," said Huntoon.

"That's it. You're not one that takes long to grasp a situation, and so I told Ingle. We are to set sail to-morrow to a point in the bay where we look to find *The Reformation* awaiting us, and then under cover of night we shall slip through the mouth of the Potomac River and be in the town ere daybreak. That, I fancy, will be a surprise indeed for Calvert, who, I hear, is lately come back from England, and fancies his little kingdom here secure from all invaders. Now, what say you? May we count on you and your son to be on the wharf with your firearms to-morrow, an hour or so past noon?"

"You may not."

Claiborne started.

"You are not ready, then, to hazard anything for the honor of Virginia."

"Pardon me; I never gave any man the right to say that, but neither gave I any man charge over my conscience to tell me what was needful

to sustain my honor or that of the Commonwealth. For my part I see in this raid you do propose an outrage on the rights of a sister colony, an outrage sure to be resented and sometime revenged, and meanwhile to sow seeds of dissension among the little handful of civilized white men scattered along this unfriendly coast."

"Forgive me," sneered Claiborne; "I had quite mistook both your character and your inclination. My time is too short to listen to longer sermon-making, the more as I must seek further for brave men who have stomach for a fight."

Huntoon bowed coldly and made a step toward the door. Claiborne hesitated.

"I trust," he said, "I may at least depend upon your secrecy."

"As for that, I must settle it with my own conscience after more thought. I sought no confidence, and am bound to no silence which I count an injury to the colony; but as the enterprise is a private one, I see so far no reason for the Government's interfering, though for myself I tell you in all frankness I should count it strict justice if you and your precious friend, Ingle, found a noose awaiting you at your journey's end."

Claiborne laughed, and played with the hilt of his sword.

"Thanks, Master Huntoon, for your courtesy

and good wishes, but we 'll look after our own necks, and do you the same. We have no taste for hanging, and it behooves all of the name of Calvert to keep more than a rope's length from Richard Ingle and William Claiborne."

With an assumed jauntiness the visitor strode out at the open door and went whistling down the path.

Huntoon stood still plunged in thought, moving his foot about on the floor. When he looked up he was startled by the change in Neville's appearance. It was as if the soul had roused itself from its long trance and had taken command of the body once more.

"I heard and I understood," he said.

"Understood what?" said Huntoon, to test him.

"Everything. It was as if his words made a gap in that wall of fog I told you of this morning, and of a sudden I could see the world beyond. Dick Ingle is come back. He and Claiborne are to attack St. Mary's. Is that true?"

"It is true," sighed Huntoon.

"And what will you do about it?"

To Huntoon this spectre, raised suddenly, as from mental death, seemed like the embodiment of his own conscience risen to confront him.

"What can I do?" he asked.

Again Neville drew his hand across his fore-

head, as though he were striving to clear away the mist that still clouded his faculties.

"Ingle — Calvert — St. Mary's," he repeated, as though the words were talismans to prevent his mind from slipping away again.

"Ay, 't is a coil — a grievous coil. I see not what I can do. I have no authority to act, and there is no time to call the Council together — "

"For you I know not. For me one thing is clear, I must go."

"Surely the Calverts and their friends have not treated you so well that you owe them either aid or warning."

"I must go." Neville seemed to be talking to himself rather than to Huntoon, and to fear most of all that he should lose the power that floated just before him, still tantalizingly beyond his grasp.

"Why must you go?"

"There is some one there who needs me. I cannot recall her name, but I seem to see her face and I hear her voice. I wish — I wish — I could call her by name." Piteously he turned to Huntoon, seeking aid.

"Is the name you seek *Elinor — Elinor Calvert?*"

"God bless you! Yes; *Elinor.* Say it again to me if my mind wanders. Elinor! Oh, I do love thee! That face of thine — it

has hovered in my dreams, but I thought it was an angel's. I remember it now, and with that smile on it and those words of thine, 'I think if thou shouldst put thine arms around me and whisper it in my ear I should believe!' Oh, Elinor, my love! Dost thou love me, dear, still? But the wall still stands between us."

"What wall?"

"The smirch upon mine honor. She would have been mine in spite of it, but I swore an oath to God never to call her wife unless I could offer her a name as clear in the sight of men as in His."

The strong man bowed his face upon his arms and wept, silently at first, then with hard, heart-rending sobs, and Huntoon stood by awed and helpless. It was the birth-cry of a soul beginning life for the second time.

At length the sobs ceased, and Neville rose and stood upright, looking inches taller than before, as though a miracle had been wrought and thought had added a cubit to his stature. He smiled, and the smile was sadder than the tears.

"Help me, Huntoon," he said, "for I am as a little child, and I have a man's work before me."

Huntoon struck hands with him, and a force of vital will-power seemed borne on that electric current of sympathy. "Fear not!" he said. "If God

has work for you, He will furnish strength to do it."

"Amen!" cried Christopher, bowing his head. When he lifted it again his face was as the face of an angel, — the angel of the sword.

Turning, Huntoon was aware that Romney and Peggy and Elizabeth were standing in the doorway and looking in bewilderment from him to Neville.

"We have had strange news, Neville and I. An attack is to be made upon St. Mary's, and Neville feels his Maryland blood thrilling to go to the rescue." Aside he said low to his wife, "Take no notice of the change, we are seeing a miracle, — the dead has come to life again."

Peggy grew white. "Christopher," she whispered, running up and laying her face against her brother's shoulder, "thou wilt not leave me!"

"Dear, I must; but I do not leave thee alone. Answer me, Peggy," and holding her face between his hands he gazed deep into her eyes, "Dost thou love Romney Huntoon?"

Peggy felt the same spell that had lain upon them all, the compelling force of an almost supernatural presence, before which her little doubts and hesitations vanished and her dimpling artifices faded into utter pettiness. She stood looking up at him, "in the eyes all woman, in the lips half child," till his earnest gaze forced an

answer. "I do," she said, without blush or tremor.

"Come here, Romney," said Neville; and placing Peggy's hand in the young man's, "be good to her!" he said.

Then turning to where Elizabeth and Humphrey stood side by side, he took a hand of each.

"Kind friends, — and better no man ever had, — do me one more favor in accepting this little sister of mine as your daughter."

"Trust me!" said Humphrey; but Elizabeth said never a word, only moved across the room and threw her protecting motherly arms around Peggy.

Christopher smiled.

"I am answered. Now, where is dear old Philpotts?"

"Here, my master," spoke the faithful retainer, who had been holystoning the bricks of the great fireplace. To him Neville stretched out his hand. "It all comes back to me now, — what you have dared and suffered and lost for me. I thank you from my soul. Perhaps 't is too much to ask, but could you find it in your heart to bear me company in one more troublous time, one more life-risk?"

"Ay, ay, I 'll follow your lead to the death!"

"Then to the wharf and loose the little boat that lies there, the one that you have been building

all summer. For the rest of you, good-bye, and God bless you, one and all!"

The little group stood on the dock and watched the boat as it stole out into the twilight, Philpotts at the helm, Neville before the mast, just as he had stood on that fatal day twelve months since, the sunlight streaming across his pale face.

"He is like Sir Tristan," thought Humphrey Huntoon, "'born to sadness and cradled in sorrow.' God grant him one glimpse of happiness before he goes hence forever!"

CHAPTER XXII

CANDLEMAS EVE

"COUTHIN Marget, dost think the ground-hog can see his shadow when he comes out of his hole to-morrow?"

"I fear it, Cecil. See how bright the west is!"

It was Candlemas Eve at St. Mary's. All day Cecil had been in the woods gathering snow-drops for the shrine of the Virgin, and binding bay-leaves into wreaths to decorate Our Lady's Chapel. Now, at sunset, he was resting with his head against Margaret Brent's knee under the great mulberry-tree on the bluff.

"Then the winter will be long?"

"So they say."

"And hard?"

"That 's what all the grandames tell."

"Is it a falsehood or a truehood?"

"True as most sayings belike."

"Then, Marget."

"Well?"

"I think I 'd best be up ere sunrise, and roll stones before all the holes, and I know five wherein ground-hogs live."

Margaret Brent laughed. "That 's just what Giles did once when he was little."

"Wath Couthin Giles ever little — really little — like me?"

"Yes, Cecil, little like you; and he and I were wont to chase butterflies through the English meadows, and it 's small thought either he or I ever had that we should end our lives here in the wilderness."

"End your lives!"

To Cecil it was as impossible to conceive of an end as of a beginning to these grown-up people who always had been, and, of course, always would be, the backbone of his world. After a pause given to meditation he resumed, —

"What makes folks die?"

"Oh! different things. They may be sick, or they may fall down stairs, or break their bones."

"I see. Then they go up to God to get mended. — Marget!"

"Ay."

"I wish Mother would get God to mend her smile."

"What 's that?"

"She used to have such a pretty smile, and now she only smiles when I make her."

"Then see that thou dost make her smile often. Perchance 't is thus that God will mend it. Come, Cecil, she will be waiting for us even now, and we shall catch the rheum if we sit longer on this damp ground."

Cecil, always glad to be in motion, jumped up, and led the way home, his yellow curls bobbing along the path, as good as a lantern in the gloaming, as Margaret Brent told herself.

At the cottage door Elinor stood bathed in the crimson light that flooded earth and sky. Her pale cheek had caught the rosy glow, and the damp February air had twisted her hair in soft clinging rings about her face. As she caught sight of Margaret and Cecil her lips parted in a welcoming smile, and she came down the path to meet them with arms outstretched.

"Look, Couthin!" cried Cecil, "God 's mending her already!"

"Pray Heaven He does!" answered Margaret, under her breath. Then, after seeing the boy clasped in his mother's arms, she turned for a last look at the scene which she had left with reluctance, for it was one of the inconsistencies of Mistress Brent's practical nature to love the poetry of the twilight, and to be willing to barter all the noon-day hour for that last swift dip of the red sun behind the hills.

To-night she stood with head thrown back

and chest expanded, as though she were physically breathing in the beauty around her. The rose-purple of a moment since had narrowed to a single crimson bar, stretched above the opal barrier of the hills, athwart the deep yellow of the sky.

"The walls were of jasper, and the city was of pure gold like unto clear glass!"

"Supper, Couthin Marget! and wheaten porridge. Come in with speed!"

"Peace, poppet! Who talks of porridge in the New Jerusalem!"

"But this is not the New Jerusalem, only the ragged little village of St. Mary's." It was Elinor's voice that answered, and Margaret rejoiced to catch a strain of oldtime lightness in it. Moreover, the promise of the voice was fulfilled as they sat at the supper-table, for Elinor was as one who has shaken off a burden. Her gown was of a rich red that might have been stolen from the sunset, and in her hair she had set a wing of the cardinal tanager. Around her neck hung a single ruby.

"Truth, Elinor, thou art like a flame to-night," exclaimed Margaret as Cecil drew out a stool for her at the table.

"'T is time, Cousin. Poor Cecil hath had too much of shadow in his little life. Now, I am fain to throw some brightness into it, if 't is but a red gown and a tanager's wing."

"Hurrah! Now art thou thine old self once more, as I saw thee on the morning when I was Lord of —"

Margaret saw the gayety fade out of Elinor's face as swiftly as a sunlighted sail is swallowed up by the gray mist.

"Dost thou mind, Elinor," she said, quickly, "how we were wont to make merry on Candlemas Eve at home in England?"

"Ay, right well I remember how once, when I was a girl, I went through the woods gathering wax berries for the candles." Here she paused, and added softly, with a mounting flush and a tender smile, "'T was with Christopher Neville."

Margaret Brent looked up astonished.

"Yes, Cousin, I can speak his name, and mean to talk often of him with Cecil, to make the boy, so far as I can, in his image, so tender and true, so steadfast and faithful to death."

"Thou art a brave woman."

"Nay, I have been till now a very foolish one. Even now, as thou didst see, Cecil's words and all they called up cut to the quick like a two-edged knife; but this is wrong, and I know it. Sure, God did not give us memory to be a curse, but a joy. So far as I sinned toward Christopher I must bear the burden of sorrow; but I mean not that it shall blight all the past. We were happy together once — then sorrow

swept between ; but now that too has passed, and I am fain to live once again, though alone, the happiness we shared."

" Art sure it will not try thine endurance too far to dwell so on the past ? "

" Nay, for I love it, and 't is so real, — far, far more real than the present. Why, I can smell again the fragrance of the waxen berries, and I can see Christopher as he stood pulling down the bushes and smiling at my eagerness to fill my pail. I think there never was a smile quite like his. 'T was more in the eyes than the lips, and it seemed to have actual warmth in it, like the fire yonder."

" Ay, 't was clear wonderful to see what a change a smile could make in that stern face of his."

" Oh, but in those days there was no sternness in his face, only a great gladness and gayety. I have seen him lie under the trees and whistle beneath the hat pulled over his face, till all the birds gathered round and wondered what strange new creature it was that had learned so merry a note."

Elinor's eyes grew dark and misty as she looked across the candle-light into the darkness beyond ; but the smile still curved her lips, and an expression lay on her face as of one who listens and responds.

" Mother, wilt thou sing me a song as thou dost every Candlemas ? "

"Cecil, I fear my voice will not follow my resolutions; but yes, — it shall. What wilt thou have me sing?"

"Oh, the song about the lady with the green sleeves."

"Must it be that, Cecil? Surely some other would do as well."

"No, 't is my favorite of them all."

Elinor paled a little; but she began bravely, and her courage and her voice rose together till at the end there came a triumphant burst that swelled beyond the narrow walls and could be heard out on the road, and the villagers stood still to listen, and nudged each other with wonder.

"Heard ye that? 'T is Mistress Calvert singing, — Mistress Calvert!"

When the song was ended, Margaret took her turn at story-telling, and then Cecil must sing; and thus the time sped away so fast that they could scarce believe their ears when the curfew bell sounded for "lights out," and Cecil well-nigh forgot the answer to the bell, that he had been taught in babyhood and repeated every night since he could speak: "Christ send us the lights of Heaven!"

"Off to bed with thee, Cecil," said his mother, taking his face between her hands, as was her wont, and kissing him on both cheeks. "To bed, and sweet dreams attend thee!"

"Yet forget not to be up early," added Margaret.

"No fear, I have all the candles to light for the Candlemas blaze, and Father White hath promised I may help him in the chapel of Our Lady."

Leaning against his mother's knee he looked up into her face, exclaiming, —

"Oh, but I do love thee!"

"I wonder why."

"Why? — because thou art thou, and I am I."

"Sweet, there is no other reason for loving in all the wide world."

"I can think of other reasons too — little ones."

"What?"

"I love thee for the gold of thy hair, and for the holes at the corners of thy mouth, and for the seed cake thou didst give me, and for not beating me when I fell into the Governor's Spring in my new breeches, and for rubbing my legs that night."

Elinor threw her arms about the child with a swift hug, jealously noting that he was taller by a head than last year. The boy belongs to his mother. The man belongs to the world or to some other woman.

"I love thee too" was all she said.

Clasping his arms close about his mother's

neck, Cecil whispered, "God *is* mending thee, and I *am* so glad, 'cos now thou wilt have no need to die."

When the child was gone the two women drew nearer to the fire and began to rake the ashes together, but slowly, as if loath to put out the cheerful domestic spark, though the air was too soft to need warming, and the full moon blandly shining in through the window served amply for light.

With the dying of the fire Elinor's cheer seemed to die too, and she sat silent in the moonlight with hands folded before her and feet thrust out toward the warm ashes.

"Margaret!"

"Yes."

"Ralph Ingle was here yesterday."

"I thought I saw him vanishing from the door as I came."

"Yes, he was here, and he asked me again to marry him."

"And thou —"

"I told him for the fortieth time that marriage was not for me."

"Did that settle it?"

"Nay, he only smiled."

"Insolent fellow!"

"No, Cousin, there is no insolence in Ralph Ingle, but something which frights me more, — or did till to-day, — a calm biding of his time, as

though in the end, struggle against fate as I would, he must triumph and I must yield."

"Bah, Elinor! That's the talk of a woman who seeks excuse for yielding. Your will is as strong as his; use it!"

Elinor's lips shut in a proud silence. There was something in Margaret Brent's manner which did not invite, much as it justified, self-revelation. Few make confidences to those who never make mistakes. Elinor made a move as if to rise; but Margaret laid her hand upon her arm. "Cousin," said the older woman, "I have heard thy story; now listen to mine. I loved a man once —"

Elinor started.

"Ah, thou didst never think I had known what it was to love?"

"He — he was a lucky man," stammered Elinor, in surprise.

"He might have been a lucky man, though perchance it behooves not me to say it; yet I verily believe I could have made him happy, but that he was of a jealous temper —"

Elinor, who had a blessed gift for silence, used it now.

"Yes," Margaret continued; "he was jealous by nature, and therefore lent a ready ear when one dropped poison in it."

"He doubted *thee?*"

"He thought he had proof."

"And the villain who traduced thee to him —"

"Was Dick Ingle, and thou dost well to call him villain. 'T was years ago in England, and we have met but twice since; but I know the blood, and I swear to thee I 'd rather see thee carried out of this room in thy coffin than as the bride of an Ingle."

"Yet Ralph —"

"Oh, I know he hath not the brutal outside of his brother, but, Elinor, I count him falser at heart. You don't always see a snake, but you trace his course by the rippling of the grass. Something always goes wrong when Ralph Ingle is about. Trust him not with thy little finger, much less thy hand in marriage."

"Listen, then, Margaret, and thou wilt rejoice with me and understand the better my lightness of spirit this night when I tell thee that yester morning Ralph Ingle renounced me, told me I was too cold for any love save for a dead man, — God help me, that is true, — then suddenly, as if carried beyond his own control, he seized me in his arms and kissed me, and then flung through the doorway. At the door he turned once more and said, 'Elinor, thy day of grace is ended!'

"I was much angered by his free manner, and I answered, —

"'If the day of grace be the day of thy company, the sooner ended the better.'

"'I am going away,' he said.

"For answer I but courtesied, with a great gladness at my heart.

"'The time may come when thou wilt beg me to wed thee.'

"I laughed.

"'Till that time comes I will never speak of marriage more,' he said. Then with one devouring glance, he bowed low and left the house, and Sheriff Ellyson told me to-day that he saw him with three men making down the river in a pinnace. Pray Heaven, he is gone forever!"

"Ay, pray Heaven; but keep thy wits at work none the less, and never believe that an Ingle means what he says. They say only what they wish thee to believe; and as for Ralph Ingle giving thee up, he has about as much intention on 't as my gray cat, that withdraws into the dark and lets her victim mouse play about till she 's ready for the spring."

"Cousin, thou art suspicious."

"Say rather, watchful."

"'T is all one."

"Nay. If thou art watchful, thou mayst find there is no cause for suspicion."

Elinor sat looking at the woman opposite her. Dead silence fell between them, till at last, with a

cry, Elinor threw herself on her knees at her cousin's side.

"Love me, Margaret! Try to love me! There are so few to love me now!"

It was as if the cry of Elinor's full heart broke down the barriers that had somehow raised themselves between her and Margaret Brent. A single word had laid them low, never to rise again.

"I do love thee; I do," whispered Margaret, folding her arms close about Elinor. "Poor child! Life hath been a hard school for thee."

"And I an unruly scholar," murmured Elinor, smiling through her tears.

"Perchance; most of us are. But now shalt thou give proof of thy new-found spirit of obedience by obeying me, and getting this weary body of thine into bed. Hark! the watchman is crying ten of the clock."

With a certain joy in being bidden like a little child, Elinor rose and moved to her chamber. It is, however, one thing to go to bed, and quite another to go to sleep. Strive as she would, she could not shake off the sombre shadow of Margaret's words.

At last, unable to rest quiet longer, she rose and went to Cecil's little bed. There he lay, flushed and rosy in sleep, with the coverlid thrust aside and revealing the firm curves of a sturdy leg.

"Thank God for him!" murmured his mother, and taking down a vial of holy water she sprinkled a few drops on the golden curls. Then from the shelf beneath the crucifix she took down a little brown book with worn cover and dog's-eared corners. Opening at random her eyes fell on these words: —

"Love is a great thing, yea, a great and thorough good: by itself it makes everything that is heavy light, and it bears evenly all that is uneven. For it carries a burden which is no burden and makes everything which is bitter sweet and savory."

"Heigh ho!" sighed Elinor; but she read on.

"Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller nor better in heaven and earth."

"For some," murmured Elinor, and read on.

"My child, thou art not yet a courageous lover. Because for a slight opposition thou givest over thy undertakings and too eagerly seekest consolation. A courageous lover standeth firm in temptations and giveth no credit to the crafty persuasions of the enemy —"

A tear slid down upon the hand that turned the page. Tears are crystallized confession. Elinor bowed her head.

"Alas! Alas! How the words pierce to my

heart's core! It is to me surely that they were written. What a coward in love have I been! How ready at the first whisper to sink from faith into doubt! To me God gave such chance as falls to the lot of few women to hold up the hands of my love, and the chance slipped from me, and I joined the ranks of them that doubted and turned aside.

"Is it too late now to repent? No, never too late for that. What consolation, what joy, what glory to feel that perhaps ages hence, when I have worked out the penance my sin demands in Purgatory, I may rise to the presence of the saints, where, for all the churchmen say, God must make a place for souls like Christopher's! Then I shall look into his eyes and he will forgive and bless me."

The thought brought comfort, and she turned back to her couch with a calmer mind. As she passed the window she heard the watchman calling the hour of midnight, followed by the familiar cry, —

> "From fire and brand and hostile hand
> God save our town!"

For some time she stood still, watching, with a comfortable sense of safety, the queer figure and the twinkle of his lantern as it bobbed up and down along the street.

"Elinor, is that thou?"

"Ay, Margaret."

"Now art thou unruly, indeed, — walking the house at midnight like an uneasy ghost, when I bade thee go to bed and to sleep. To bed, I say, this instant!"

Elinor smiled, but obeyed, and drawing the coverlid over her fell into a light slumber, broken by a fitful dream in which the world seemed to be whirling around, and Ralph Ingle was pushing it to make it go faster, when suddenly Christopher Neville appeared, and all at once it stopped and she could hear his voice bidding her be of good cheer and fear nothing. Then came the unconsciousness of deeper sleep; and at last, out of that calm there swept a great noise, a rush of feet along the quiet street, a swinging of lanterns, a hurried knocking at the door, and a shout, —

"Make ready all within! *Dick Ingle is at the gates!*"

CHAPTER XXIII

"HEY FOR ST. MARY'S, AND WIVES FOR US ALL!"

MORNING was streaking the black of night with a single line of silver as Richard Ingle dropped anchor in St. Mary's River opposite the little town marked by its tall rude cross and its sentinel mulberry-tree on the edge of the bluff. Already the men were lowering boats and filling them with muskets, powder, and shot, and strips of wood soaked in oil.

As Ingle looked upward at the sleeping village, his heart swelled with delight. Let no one fancy that happiness is the reward of virtue. To the good there can be little individual happiness that does not carry its own sting in the thought of the cost to others at which it has been purchased, but to the bad man life is simplified to

> "The good old rule, the simple plan,
> That he may take who has the power,
> And he may keep who can."

Through these twelve long months the memory of the indignity thrust upon him at Brent's

behest, as he firmly believed, by the townspeople of St. Mary's, had rankled in his memory. This, combined with his old grudge against Margaret Brent, drove him back to England. This kindled his delight at finding King Charles defeated and Parliament in control. This was always in mind when he represented to the government the dangerous growth of Catholic power in Maryland, and this the crown of his triumph when he found himself turning the prow of *The Reformation* westward once more, armed with letters of marque giving him license to attack these dangerous monarchists and schismatics and harry them out of the land if he could.

"Now, my friends," thought he, as he peered through the darkness at the dim outlines of the wharf, "we 'll see whose turn it is to be tossed aboard a vessel like a sack of grain. I 'll settle my score with you, Sheriff Ellyson, and with you, Worshipful Councillor Neale. As for you, Giles Brent, if you get not a sword-thrust from my blade that will make you carry your head a shade less high, my name is not Dick Ingle."

As the buccaneer strode up and down the deck nursing his hot wrath, he came to where Claiborne was standing in talk with Ralph Ingle, who had joined his brother as soon as the secret news reached him that *The Reformation* lay hid among the wooded points of the bay.

"Now," said Richard, "remember that I am the Captain of this expedition and you are both to take the word from me."

"Hm! I know not," Claiborne began doubtfully.

Richard Ingle bent a compelling glance upon him.

"Did you not ask my help?"

"Ay."

"Did you not say I was worth any twenty Virginians in this expedition?"

"Belike I did."

"Is not the ammunition of my providing?"

"Oh, have done with your vain boasting!"

"I'll have done with boasting when you have done with insubordination. Do you or do you not recognize my authority?"

"On your ship, yes," answered Claiborne, flushing; "on land I take commands from no man. I am answerable to the authorities of Virginia and them only."

"And I," said Ralph, "am a free lance, and will thrust where I see fit. Besides, this expedition is as much mine as thine."

"The devil take the fellow's impudence!" exclaimed Richard. "Here have I been over seas to fetch letters of marque, and pulled members of Parliament this way and that, gathered a crew, begged, borrowed, and stolen money to

buy powder and shot, and now you, who have stayed in the lap of luxury there at St. Gabriel's, would have me give you control."

"The still hog sups the milk," answered Ralph, coolly. "'T was I kept you informed of the temper of the colony, of Brent's unreadiness for attack; and did you but know it I did you the greatest favor of all in ridding the colony of the one man who might have detected your plot and made some head against us."

Richard Ingle flushed and laid his hand upon the hilt of his sword; but Claiborne, foreseeing an ill beginning if the invaders fell to fighting among themselves before they were fairly landed, stepped between the brothers and laid a hand on the shoulder of each as he said, —

"There is honor enough ahead for each of you and for me too, so let us not quarrel over that. Let Dick direct his crew, while I lead the Virginians in the ship behind us, and you, Ralph, shall be the free lance."

The words were timely. Richard put up his sword, and Ralph smiled again, — that frank smile that had won its way to Giles Brent's heart and deceived him to the end.

Claiborne saw his advantage and pressed it. "First of all," he said, "we must have a rallying cry whereby we may know friend from foe."

"The cry of the townsfolk up yonder is 'Hey for St. Mary's, and wives for us all!'"

"We'll make it true by taking of their wives."

"Ay," chuckled Dick, "we'll make hay of St. Mary's, set fire to the rick, and then off to sea again with wives for us all!"

"A merry jest. You would have made your fortune as a clown, Dick."

"The trouble is I have your fortune to make, too, Ralph, and you're too much of the damned fine gentleman for me, and find my ways over rough."

"Keep to the point, my friends, keep to the point," interrupted Claiborne. "'T is a rallying cry we want. Now what say you to 'God and the Parliament'?"

A soft voice from Richard Ingle's right answered, "Think you not 't were as well to leave the name of God out of the business? Considering the nature of the matter in hand, is it not just possible that He might take offence?"

"Faith, I believe you're right for once, Ralph!" cried Richard Ingle, with a certain generosity, not detecting the sarcasm underlying his brother's words. "For my part, I think that cry too tame. I would like better 'The devil take the Brents!' or 'To Hell with the Calverts!'"

"All save one!" murmured Ralph under his

breath. Aloud he said, "Let 'Ingle!' be our cry. 'T is short and sharp and sufficient."

"So let it be!" assented Richard; "but were it not well to have badges on the arm besides the cry, that we may know each other by them when the growing dawn gives light enough to see?"

"'T is a good thought," said Claiborne. "I have a roll of green cloth which can be swiftly torn into bands; but I know not if 't is enough to go round among so many."

"I will be answerable for mine own," said Ralph Ingle, putting his hand to the breast of his jerkin and drawing out a green ribbon of watered silk.

"See what a fop this brother of mine learned to be in France. His very points must be tagged with gold, and, on my life, the tags are tipped with emerald!"

"Ay," said Ralph, coolly, "I got them of a French Seigneur without his permission, and they have been cursed unlucky so far. The first tag I lost in the forest near St. Gabriel's and could never find again, and the point with the other tag joined to it was stolen by a Patuxent brave while I was on a mission, — the sacrilegious savage! Since then for safe keeping I have carried this in the inner pocket of my jerkin."

"Cease talking of your jewelled points and

make haste," cried Claiborne, testily. "Speed is the main thing. To be discovered is to be balked, if not defeated."

"Push off there in the first boat if you are ready! Shall I go in her, Captain Ingle?"

"Ay, and command her crew. Wait for us at the shore, and we 'll rush the stockade together."

"But how to mount the bluff?"

"There is a road, and I suppose it was made to be walked on."

"Ay, but it leads to the strongest fortified of the gates."

"You are a monstrous clever man, Master Claiborne; but for all that, Dick Ingle knows more tricks than ever a juggler taught you."

"That means I am to have no confidences."

Ingle laid his red finger to the side of his redder nose.

"Are you Captain or I?"

"You are Captain but not Pope; I suppose you may be questioned."

"All in good time, Master Claiborne; all in good time. Yonder on the strip of beach below the bluff I will give my orders and divulge my plans."

"Fend off!" called Claiborne, sullenly, to the man at the prow of the small boat, and seating himself in the stern he pulled his cloak close about him, muttering to himself,—

"Damn the fellow! I begin to hate him worse than Calvert."

"Dick," said Ralph Ingle as the two brothers were left alone together, "what treatment might a prisoner look for if brought aboard this ship?"

"Why, all the difference betwixt a swift death and a slow one."

"And if the prisoner were a woman —"

"Nay, none of that business, Ralph! I was but jesting when I spoke of carrying off the villagers' wives. Remember, we take our commission from the Roundheads, who do faithfully believe we are bent on promoting the Puritan religion in this part of the world." Here Richard Ingle burst into a roar of laughter, but his brother's eyes flashed.

"You know not how to take a gentleman," he said.

"Indeed," sneered his brother, "have a few months in the Brent household turned thee into such a white-livered fellow, half prude, half priest? Nay, nay," seeing his brother's sulky looks; "I meant not to vex thee, though 't is a damned odd time for talking of such matters; but take thy pleasure as thou wilt, only now make ready for the prettiest fight thou hast seen since we met the pirates off Algiers."

"The other pirates," corrected Ralph, and

began buckling on his cutlass and feeling for his pistols.

"Come on, then," called Richard, lowering himself over the ship's side, "come on, men; rally to the cry of 'Ingle!' Never mind giving quarter, and set the torches to every house in St. Mary's. There 's plunder enough for us all, and then up sail and away before the burghers know who 's struck them."

The muffled oars sped silently through the water; silently, too, the keels of the boats slipped over the sand of the beach. With unshod feet, pistols in belts, and cutlass in hand, the men ranged themselves in a ragged line, and before them, Richard Ingle stood in a theatrical attitude, with one hand on his hip, the other waving a sword.

"Are you ready for a fight, my men?"

"Try us!"

"Ready to make a bonfire of yonder town?"

A waving torch answered, but was speedily extinguished by Ingle's order.

"Ready to open the bung-holes in the tavern barrels?"

"Ay, and drink the spirit as it runs."

"Then you're the men for Dick Ingle. Claiborne, how many have you in your command?"

"Forty."

"Take twenty, and climb yonder stairs. There

is a gap in the palisade at their head. Put your men through it single file, and in dead silence. There is no guard.

"Ralph!"

"Ay."

"Do you take the other twenty and follow the longer trail leading to the rear of the town. When our approach is known, the rush will be for the river gate. That leaves your gate weak. Beat it down. Once in, I leave you to your work."

"Trust me!"

"The rest of you follow me. Swift and still. That's your motto till we burst in with a yell, and surprise our friends. The guard is bribed, the gate unbarred. Up and forward!"

Forward they went with a rush, Ingle well in front, — up the hilly road at a double quick to the very shadow of the palisade, not a sound giving warning of their approach.

Suddenly from that gray picketed line of logs broke a zigzag streak of fire, and out into the stillness boomed the sound of guns.

"We are betrayed!" muttered Claiborne, turning at the head of the steps, out of breath with the climb.

"Follow me!" cried Richard Ingle. "Twenty pounds to the first man over the wall, or through the gate!"

"Ingle! Ingle!" the cry rose from all sides,

as the men rushed after their leader toward the stockade. Several fell; but the others closed in and rushed on the faster.

"I fear they're too many for us!" muttered Giles Brent, as he peered through the peep-hole of the gate. "If we could have had the news but a few hours earlier! Fire at the tall man with the green cap, Neville! — and there's Ingle, the same swashbuckler as ever! But he's a brave devil. Gather the guard, Neville. Open on them with the culverin; if they break in the gate, give them clubbed muskets: *Hey for St. Mary's, and wives for us all!*"

No man who took part in that morning's fight ever forgot the day. Almost every fighter had his private feud to avenge, and under the guise of sustaining his colony, slashed and hacked for St. Mary, or St. Richard Ingle, and broke heads in fine style, all for the honor of the Commonwealth or the Palatinate in general, and the satisfaction of James and John and Robert in particular.

Oh, but it was a fine skirmish! and when the invaders, despite the thunder of the culverin, broke in the iron-studded gate and rushed upon the defenders, the fighting took on still more interest. If there is pleasure in knocking over your enemy at a distance with a cannon-ball, it is as nothing to the joy of felling him with your clubbed musket, where he can claim no foul, no better armament,

but must acknowledge as he falls, that he dies because you are the better man, and surrender his pride before he gives up the ghost.

Who would not throw away years of inglorious safety to know the mad leap of the blood bounding along his veins as he cut and thrust and parried in the rough give and take of battle? When the Anglo-Saxon forgets that stern ecstasy, his domination of the earth is at an end.

There is, however, one class to whom the struggle brings little of this exhilaration. The non-combatants bear the heart-breaking anxieties of the combat and know nothing of its delights. Little did Elinor Calvert know or care about the effect of fighting on national character as she stood at the door of her cottage in the little hamlet of St. Mary's, holding her boy by the hand. Her heart had room for only one thought, — terror, — not so much for herself as for her child. "But surely," she thought, "none could be so cruel as to harm him!" and she looked down on his yellow curls and drew him closer, and folded her cloak about him as though that feeble shelter could avail anything against men with hearts of steel and arms of iron. Her mind was still bewildered with the suddenness of the excitement.

"Oh, Mother!" cried Cecil, anxious to be a hero, but conscious of a painful sinking at the

pit of his stomach, "what manner of man is this Ingle? Will he have horns and a tail like the devil?"

"Fear not, Cecil," Margaret Brent answered. "Dick Ingle has cowered before me ere this. Let him face me now if he dares. He has lied about me to the man I loved, he has done his best to ruin my life, but he has never yet dared to look me in the eye since. If he enters the town this day, he and I will have it out. Elinor, are there fire-arms in the house?"

"Nay, but I have my dagger —"

"Keep it; thou mayst have need of it. Stay thou here with the child, and I will take my pistol and go to the gate. Doubtless Giles will take command at the gate next the river."

"Nay, Margaret, are there not men enough?"

"Not so many but they will be the better for one woman."

"Thou canst not fight like a man."

"Perhaps not, — I have not yet tried; but at least I can make the men fight better. There was never soldier yet that did not shoot straighter and strike deeper if a woman were looking on. That's what we're for, Coz, — not to pit our strength against men's, but to double theirs."

"Margaret, thy courage shames me; I will come too. At least, I can carry powder and water-buckets."

"No; rather make ready thine house here, for I know Ingle well enough to be sure of hot fighting and many hurt. We shall need a hospital and a nurse. Tear thy linen into bandages, and set Cecil to preparing lint for wounds. Now, good-bye, and may God have you both in his keeping till we meet again!"

As the door closed after her, Elinor felt that a strong presence had passed out and she shivered. Now she caught the sharp clash of combat at the gate and the rival cries, —

"Ingle! Ingle! Claiborne and Ingle!"

Then, louder still, —

"Hey for St. Mary's, and wives for us all!"

Her heart failed her as she looked at Cecil, and she thought of the powerful arm that might have been near to protect both her boy and her. She breathed a deep sigh.

"Mother," whispered Cecil, "I will guard thee; do not fear!" But he crowded closer against her skirt.

"Sweet one, 't is for thee I fear most. Run thou within and hide thyself while thou canst."

"Mother!" cried the boy, "I am a Calvert. Dost think Cousin Giles would ever speak with me again if I deserted thee? Why, I am almost a man. See, up to thy shoulder already. I can, at least, throw a stone;" and he picked one up from the road.

"We can at least die together," Elinor murmured, "and it may be soon."

"But perhaps we sha'n't die," Cecil whispered consolingly. "Thou knowst to-day is the festival of Candlemas. I remember, when we were gathering the greens and taking them down from the chapel last night, some one bade me see that no leaf was neglected, for as many as I left, so many goblins should I see. And so I went back and picked up the very last, and then Father White blessed two great candles and gave them me and bade me burn them on the shrine of St. Michael, because he was my patron saint and I was born on his day."

"And didst thou?"

"Ay, Mother, when I came home and saw the image in my room, — thou knowst the one of the saint, with his foot on the devil's head, — I thought, for safety's sake, I would offer one to the devil, too, for who knew when it might come his turn to befriend one. Now I will go in and light the candles, and I will pray to Michael and beg him to come and set his foot on Dick Ingle's neck. Ingle must look a deal like Lucifer; and Michael — Mother, dost not think Michael must look rather like Master Neville?"

Elinor started as if a bandage had been torn from some hidden wound. She gave a little gasp; but the nearer trampling of feet called

her thoughts back to the pressing needs of the present moment. In truth, they were urgent. Already the fighting mob was surging through highway and byway lighted by the glare of the burning church. They fought, not like an army, but in little detached groups, without order or leadership. Here the enemy gained ground, here the townsfolk.

What was this the men were bearing to her door? Her heart sank as she recognized Giles Brent.

"Oh, Giles! Cousin! — art thou hurt?"

"A scratch, — a mere scratch, on my honor;" but he whitened as he spoke.

"Bear him in," said Elinor to the two men on whose shoulders he was leaning, "bear him in, and I will make a bed ready for him."

As she watched the men following her bidding, her mind leaped back to the last time she had seen Brent, — the day when he told her of Neville's death, and when she had sworn never to own kinship or speak with him again till he took back his accusation. "I have broken my vow," she said to herself. "God forgive me! Yet not so much the breaking as the making."

Then she turned to follow him in; but as she moved, she felt her wrist grasped from behind, softly but with the irresistibleness of a handcuff of iron.

Looking round, she caught sight of a sleeve of russet cloth bound about with a green ribbon with gold and emerald tags, and turning she found herself face to face with Ralph Ingle.

Instinctively she struggled to free herself, then perceiving that her strength was no match for his, she stood still.

"I am thy slave still," he whispered. "Give me one kind word, one glance to kindle hope in my heart, and my sword is thine for offence and defence. Nay, 't is in my power to save thy kinsman, whom I have just seen borne in at thy door. I saw him fall and followed his bearers, sure that they would bring him here."

"'T is a fair return thou art making for his hospitality."

"I wonder not at thy surprise."

"Surprise! I feel none. 'T is what I should look for in one of thy name and race. If I was once deceived in thee, I know thee now for what thou art."

"What am I?"

"A traitor."

"Harsh words, my lady! Couldst not choose some gentler name?"

"Nay, if I called thee aught else, 't would be *murderer*."

Ingle turned pale.

"By what token?"

"By that Iscariot badge on thine arm."

The man looked down in bewilderment.

"Ay, that point convicts thee. 'T is as though the finger of the Lord were laid upon that emerald tag, and His voice said, 'Thou art the man.'"

"Who told thee?"

"No man told me; but murder will out, though the deed be wrought in the blackness of midnight and the body of the victim lie hid in the shadows of the forest."

"'T is false. Thou dost but babble to gain time."

"'T is true. Thy very pallor and trembling proclaim it true. Thou didst slay an unarmed man, alone and unprotected in the wilderness. Worse than that, thy victim was a priest of Holy Church, whose very garb should have been sacred to thee."

Ingle reddened and spoke more sullenly.

"There be many sins heavier than the taking off of a Jesuit."

"Ay, there be heavier sins. Shall I name thee one?"

"An it please thee."

"Then I count it a heavier sin than the committing of a crime to let another be charged with thy deed, and still baser when thou thyself dost egg on his accusers. Thou *Judas!*"

Ingle's look darkened, and he grasped her wrist still more firmly.

"Thou hast had thy say. Now I will have mine. I will teach thee to call me by a new name."

Elinor's lip curled with scorn.

"Yes," he went on, "I will show thee what I am, and first of all I am thy master."

"A moment since thou wert my slave."

"Ay, both slave and master in one; and I am come to take thee with me to a place where thou shalt know me under both guises."

"Never!"

With her left hand Elinor Calvert pulled a dagger from her belt; but before she had time to use it, Ingle loosed her other hand and seizing Cecil cried, "When thou wouldst see thy boy again, seek the world through for Ralph Ingle."

He was gone before Elinor could utter a word; and when she would have rushed after him her limbs seemed made of lead, her outstretched arms fell nerveless at her side, her knees tottered under her, and with her child's shriek of terror ringing in her ears, his pleading eyes still straining toward hers, she fell to earth in a dead swoon.

As she fell, Margaret Brent turned the corner of the street, and seeing her believed her wounded, and rushed toward her with open arms, while from the other side Richard Ingle advanced, brandish-

ing a pistol in one hand and a torch in the other. He and Margaret Brent met above the prostrate form.

"So you are here," he said; "I thought you were at Kent Fort, and I meant to seek you there. I killed that precious brother of yours."

Margaret Brent paid no more heed to him than if he had been a fly in her path. She knelt by Elinor's side, and finding the pulse beating still drew a breath of relief. Once more, however, she bent over lower still, and when she rose it was with a cocked pistol, which she pointed full at Ingle's head.

"*If you move so much as a finger, I fire!*"

So amazed was the invader that he made no attempt to stir, but stood looking at the woman before him with ashen face and dropped jaw.

"Dick Ingle," said Margaret, still with pistol levelled, "you have pursued me for years, first with your unwelcome love and then with malignant hate; you have lied about me to Thomas White; you have tried to ruin my life. Now you say you have killed my brother. Is there any reason why I should not kill you? Nay, do not move so much as a hair, or you are a dead man. I know how to shoot, and I have no hesitation in taking life. Answer me. Have you not deserved death at my hands?"

"The devil take my soul! — I have."

"I like you for owning it. I like you for appealing to the devil, whom you love and serve, instead of to God. If you had denied your deviltries, I swear I would have put a bullet through your heart. As it is, I am satisfied. Go!"

She lowered her pistol and stood looking at him, alone, helpless, unprotected. So he had seen her in imagination many times. So he had vowed he would have no mercy. Now she had shown mercy. She had held his life in her hand, and had spared it. This was the worst of all the wrongs she had done him. The thought galled him beyond endurance. Quick as lightning, he raised his pistol and fired, then covered his eyes with his arm. God forgive the wretch! He loved this woman still.

When he looked again the vision stood there yet, the eyes still dominating him, a cool smile on the haughty lips.

"Coward!" was all she said; but it was enough. Ingle, the redoubtable, the terror of the seas, the conqueror in fifty combats with desperate men, turned and ran as though the fiends were after him. The groups of his men that he passed, seeing a sight never before witnessed, — their leader fleeing with a look of terror on his face, — joined in the retreat toward the steps which led down the bluff, crying as they went, "To the ships! to the ships! Ingle! Ingle!"

Cornwaleys, who had hastily gathered a band of followers from neighboring plantations, came rushing after and fancied that it was he and his men who had routed Ingle. So he told the story afterward at the tavern. So the villagers all believed.

Only Margaret Brent knew.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CALVERT MOTTO

"PUT me down! Put me down!" screamed Cecil.

"I put thee down? I 'll see thee roasted first!"

"I hate thee!"

"Very like; but wait, thou little imp, till I have thee safe in the ship!"

"In St. Michael's name!" cried the child, and beat Ralph Ingle lustily about the head; but Ingle swept down his chubby arms as though they had been gnats, and ran on toward the nearest gate.

When he reached the Governor's Spring, he noticed that the waters ran red with blood. By its margin two men were cutting and thrusting with sword and cutlass, while a third with hand clasped to his throat lay along the curb, his head hanging lifeless over the water.

"Help, Ralph!" came in Claiborne's voice from the group.

As he called out he retreated a step, that he might free the weapon which his adversary held engaged.

His opponent, who fought with his back to Ingle, took advantage of the retreat, and making a lunge forward, drove his sword into Claiborne's side, crying out, —

"Take that for the death of Philpotts!"

Claiborne fell, wounded.

"Wait till I get some one to hold this wriggling brat, and I'm with you."

So far Ingle had gone in his speech when the foeman turned, and Ingle saw that in front of him which made his cheek blanch and his heart fail and his knees totter under him, for there stood a dead man waving a sword and making ready for a thrust at his heart, while Cecil shouted aloud with joy, —

"Thir Chrithtopher! help! help! He is taking me from my mother!"

No words answered. From a ghost none were to be looked for; but the steel flashed in air, and when it drew back it left a trail of blood. Ingle felt a quick intolerable pain at his heart, and the arm around Cecil slackened its hold till the child dropped to the ground.

"So you are come to take me to Hell, are you?" he muttered between set teeth, then swayed, reeled, and fell to earth with eyes fixed.

Neville stood over him with vengeance in his glance.

"Are you from the charnel-house or from Hell itself?" asked Ingle.

"Is not this enough like Hell?"

"Ah, you *have* come from Hell, and know what it is like. Did the devil tell you? I meant to thwart Satan himself by confessing just before I died."

"If you have a confession to make, best be quick, for your last hour is come."

"A priest!" he murmured, for years of indifference could not quite obliterate the memory of Pater Nosters lisped at his mother's knee; "or no, a priest would be harder than any, they stick so close by one another."

"If you do indeed desire to free your soul of a confession," said Neville, touched in spite of himself by the look of death on Ingle's face, "speak to me and in the presence of this child whom you have wronged."

"Do you think I could so escape Hell?"

"'T is no business of mine," answered Neville; "but for myself I 'd not like to die with a sin on my soul."

"No business of yours! Then — the — devil — did — not — tell — you."

The words came slower now, with little gasps between. Suddenly his glazing eye brightened a

little. "A priest! a priest!" he repeated. Looking round, Neville saw Father White passing up and down rendering help and solace to the wounded. "Run and fetch him, Cecil!" he said.

The child plucked the good priest by the cloak. "Father, come, Father!" he said. "Ralph Ingle hath need of thee. He is dying and would fain confess."

Father White dropped the cup of water he was carrying, and coming to the side of the dying man knelt beside him.

"I think, after all, I won't tell," Ingle whispered. "Even this dead man had not heard it, and perhaps the devil himself has caught no word."

"Think not to escape so," said the priest; "the moments of time for thee are short, but the years of eternity are long, and through them all comes no chance such as lies before thee now to make some scant atonement by confession, and earn, perhaps, if not Heaven at least Purgatory, in place of Hell."

"Bah!" said Ralph Ingle, rousing himself to a touch of his old-time boldness, "'t is no use to strive to fright me with your ghostly threats. Perhaps the devil will send me up like Master Neville here to do his work on earth; that would be rare sport, to cut and thrust and be beyond the power of wounds." Here his head

sank, and for a moment it seemed as he were gone, then the eyes opened again and the boyish smile curved his lips.

"Besides, 't is no such great matter to kill a priest; there are so many of you, you know."

"So it was you!" cried Neville, with new interest in his voice and stooping he wet Ingle's lips with brandy from his flask. "Now," he said, "if you have the least spark of manhood in you, speak out. You killed Father Mohl?"

Ralph Ingle moved his head in assent.

"How?"

"Speak!" exhorted Father White; "though thou be the chief of sinners, speak and trust in the mercy of the Lord who died to save such."

"But I 'm — not — the — chief — of — sinners — 'T was the knife did it — the knife in the panther's throat."

"You found it?"

A nod.

"You were on your way from St. Mary's to St. Gabriel's?"

Nod.

"What for?"

"To stay with Brent — I promised Dick."

Father White spoke low: "At least he was true to some one. Remember it, O Lord, when thou dost count up the sum of his transgressions!"

"Ay, 't was Dick suggested it, so he and I feigned a quarrel before the gossips on the deck, and then I set out alone — More brandy — I cannot speak."

Again Neville knelt beside him and poured the brandy down his throat. Under the stimulant Ingle revived and moved as if he would sit up, but Father White stayed him.

"Waste not an inch of thy strength," he said, lifting his head, "but use it to save thy soul. Didst thou quarrel with Father Mohl?"

"Ay, 't was his fault — I was singing a tavern song to cheer me, when I met old shaven-crown — Nay, God forgive me, the holy father —

"'Good evening,' says I.

"'God have mercy on your soul!' saith he.

"'That 's between Him and me,' says I, and then he must needs answer back in Latin — I had borne to be damned in English and never raised a finger; but to be called names in an outlandish foreign tongue was too much!"

"Thou art sinning away the hour of mercy," said Father White, sternly; "speak of thyself and thy crime."

"Ay, but I want God to know why I did it.

"'Hold your tongue,' said I.

"'*Pax tibi*,' said he, near as I could catch.

"'Another word, and I 'll have your life!' said I, raising the knife.

"'*Dominus tecum!*' he answered, out of spite, as the ugly, ugly smile of him showed, and that finished him.

"The knife came down, and ere I could pull it out I heard steps near by and did run for my life —"

"Whither didst run?"

"To St. Gabriel's; and, seeing lights still up, I would fain have entered, but thought better of it, and rested in an out-house till morning."

"Traitor!" exclaimed Father White, "was thy conscience so dead thou didst feel no pricks at accepting hospitality, — thou, a murderer?"

"Not a prick; only a mighty satisfaction that the devil looks so well after his own — or — hold — art thou going to tell all this to God? For then I must say it all different."

"Speak truth! If anything could save thy guilty soul, 't were that."

"Then if I 'm damned for the business, I 'll own that I was glad when I thought myself safe, glad when I saw this man, Neville, accused, glad when I saw him sink in the river yonder. There, go back and tell that to the devil, will you?"

"Faith, you can tell him soon enough yourself," muttered Neville, as he watched the laboring heart and the eye, which now glazed faster than ever.

"Is this all?"

It was Father White who spoke. Ingle pointed to Cecil, opened his lips, gasped out, "Elinor!" and fell back dead.

Father White lifted his eyes to heaven, praying:

"Judge him not according to his demerit, but through the infinite multitude of Thy mercies, and extend Thy grace and pardon in the name of Thy dear Son."

When he rose from his knees he turned and would have clasped Neville's hand, but he and Cecil had vanished together in the direction of Mistress Calvert's cottage.

"Mother must be dead," panted Cecil, as they hurried along; "else had she surely followed me."

A deadly fear struck on Neville's heart, cold as a hailstone on an opening rose. Had he so nearly reached the goal to fail at last?

"Look!" cried Cecil. "There she is!"

Neville dropped the child's hand and rushed forward to where Elinor lay stretched, corpse-like, upon the ground, Margaret Brent chafing her cold hands. He fell upon his knees beside her and rained hot kisses on the cold fingers.

"O Death," he muttered, "you must not, *shall* not cheat me now! Not till she knows. Oh, not till then!"

"This is not death," said Margaret Brent, "but a heavy swoon. Hast thou brandy?"

For answer Neville pulled his flask from his jerkin, poured out some of the liquid and forced it between Elinor's lips, while Margaret ran to the Governor's Spring for water, taking Cecil with her to help carry the ewer.

Left alone thus with the woman he loved, the only woman he had ever loved, Neville knelt on, and watched and waited, — waited as it seemed to him for hours, though in reality it was but minutes, to catch the first flicker of those white lids, the first tremulous movement of those chiselled nostrils.

Two minds there were within him: one intent upon that still form, gazing in an agony of terror upon its immobility; the other living over the past, — that past which for him began and ended with Elinor.

How radiant she had looked at St. Gabriel's that first night, when he came in out of the cold and darkness and saw her standing like a goddess of sunshine with her yellow hair gleaming above her green robe!

How graciously she had smiled upon him when he made friends with Cecil; how tenderly she had looked at him when he offered to seek Father Mohl and beg his pardon! Here came a swift pang as the bitterness of those dark days that followed the priest's death swept over him. His lips framed the word "Unjust!" Then

lifting his head he shook back the hair, and looking up cried aloud, —

"No, though it were with my last breath, and though she should never breathe again, I vow to God, I thank Him for it all, justice and injustice alike, else had I never known how she loved me."

Up and down the street to the edge of the bluff the fight still raged around them, as one group of stragglers met another of the opposing force. None could say which had lost or won.

As for Neville, he had no care for what passed around him. All the world held for him lay there on the ground. Oh, God! would those dark-fringed eyes never open? Would those pallid lips never again redden to their old-time warmth, nor curve into their old-time tender wistfulness, nor open in the old-time gracious speech?

For one awful moment, Neville felt that this was indeed the end, and bowing his head he murmured, "It has — been — worth — while!"

The first sensation Elinor knew after her fall was a rushing of water over face and neck, a gurgling in her ears and a gasping as of some dying animal near by, then a curious realization that the gasping animal was herself, and that a sound of voices rang far and vague around her. Gradually through her closed lids gathered a dim light which, as she opened her eyes, grew to a glory dazzling

as though it streamed from the great white Throne, and shadowed against it was the outline of a familiar face, long dear to memory and of late enshrined in her heart of hearts, — the face of Christopher Neville.

"So," she murmured, "this *is* Heaven that lies beyond. I always said death would be nothing if we could be sure of that."

Then the black curtain fell again, and the next sound that struck her consciousness was Cecil's voice calling, —

"Mother! Mother! Wake up! Dick Ingle is fled, and the broidery on my coat is torn, and the Church of Our Lady is burned to the ground, and we are very hungry, and there is but corn meal in the house — oh! and Ralph Ingle —"

"Softly, little man, softly!" spoke Neville's voice. "Run into the house and fetch pillows for thy mother's head."

Slowly Elinor's mind awakened to the scene around. So this, after all, was not the pale reflection of earth cast upon the clouds of a shadowy after-life, but Heaven itself come down to earth. Love and life lay before, not behind. Too weary to question the causes of the miracle, she accepted it and thanked God.

"My dear!" she said simply, raising her arms and laying them about Neville's neck. The

effort of speech was too much for her strength, and she fell back exhausted and so white that Neville laid his hand anxiously upon her heart.

"Tell me all!" she murmured.

Neville laughed, a natural hearty laugh, for the first time since that terrible day in January. "So," he said, "'t is curiosity alone can prick thee back to life. Well, thou shalt have the story. All there is to tell, as soon as thou canst bear it. Now, let us in." And raising her in his arms he carried her to the settle where Cecil was piling the cushions.

As she sank into them, she laid her hand on the rebellious curls of her boy.

"Poor baby!" she whispered.

"Baby! 'T is no baby thou hadst thought me, Mother, hadst thou seen me wrestling with Ralph Ingle? But he would not fight fair, and he had my arms pinioned when Thir Chrithtopher met us."

"So, in addition to all my other debts, 't is to thee I owe my son," said Elinor, turning with a new tenderness in her eyes to Neville.

"Why, in a fashion, yes."

"In all fashions, Mother. Why, 't was like this —"

"Hush, Cecil, I can make naught of thy prattle. 'T is too fast and too broken. Prithee, let Sir Christopher tell me the whole story."

"Art sure thou hast strength to hear it?"

"I am sure I have not strength to do without it longer. Tell me, in Heaven's name, how it comes that thou whom all men counted dead art returned alive to be the saving of us all."

"Thank God, I was in time!"

"But how, when, where?"

"Nay, 't is too long a story, and thou art still too weak."

"Not I," said Elinor scornfully, making an effort to sit up, but failing pitifully and sinking back again.

"There, see, thou hast no more strength than I when I fell against the gate of St. Mary's last night, and they pulled me in like a log. 'T was well Philpotts had kept his breath and could cry the warning. I think the villagers took me for a ghost, for they looked at me with dazed eyes and did my bidding as though I were something beyond nature. Sheriff Ellyson lent me his sword. I owe him much thanks, else had we not this valiant little warrior with us now."

Elinor shivered and clasped Cecil close about the shoulders. "Go on, go on!" she whispered breathlessly.

"All hands were ordered to the guns at the gates. I worked side by side with Giles Brent, he, too, half shrinking from me, half drawn

toward me as if I were a messenger from another world. When he fell, two men picked him up and one asked, 'Whither shall we carry him?'

"'To Mistress Calvert's home,' said the other.

"'Mistress *Elinor* Calvert?' I asked, my knees shaking under me.

"'Ay,' said the soldier, 'she and her boy have been settled here since February. She is in the second house beyond the Church of Our Lady.' Oh, Elinor, may you never know the anguish that thought cost me! If I had fought like a man before, I fought like a devil then, but we had not ammunition enough for our guns. The time was too short for bringing it from the powder-house, and they burst in at the weakest gate, the one furthest from mine, and then my only thought was to get to thee and die fighting at thy side. No, that's not true neither, for I thought little of dying: my blood was up, and I was bent on trying how many of the rascally invaders I could put an end to.

"I started from the gate on a dead run, and before I had gone a hundred paces I found old Philpotts by my side. Hard by the Governor's Spring we met Claiborne with a gang of marauders, armed with cutlasses. One of them made at Philpotts and ran him through the throat, so the poor fellow fell without a groan, and the

blood of his faithful heart flowed out into the spring. Heaven rest his soul! for truer friend man never had."

"And thou?"

"Faith, 't was like to have fared no better with me; but that Neale and Ellyson and their following let drive at the invaders and drove them off, following them to keep them on the run. Only Claiborne stood his ground. Just as my sword touched him in the side, I heard him cry, 'Help, Ralph!' and turning I found myself face to face with Ingle, carrying Cecil in his arms; the poor child was screaming lustily."

"And fighting, Thir Chrithtopher. Say now, was I not scratching and biting valiantly?"

"That he was, and hath a handful of the pirate's hair as a keepsake. Just then Ingle caught sight of me, and 't was as if he saw the Day of Judgment. 'So you 're come to take me to Hell, are you?' he said. With that he dropped Cecil, and ran at me with his cutlass, having no time to draw pistol. 'T was scarce a fair fight, for I verily believe had he not been mastered by ghostly fear he would have finished me."

"Thank God for the deliverance!"

"Ay, and for a greater mercy than life. The wretch did make confession to Father White, and of what, thinkst thou?"

"Oh, Mother," cried Cecil, unable to curb his

impatience another moment, "it was *he* who killed Father Mohl."

"I know."

"Thou knowest? In God's name, how didst thou know?" Neville exclaimed.

"The emerald tag."

Margaret Brent had entered unperceived, and now her questioning eyes said, "Who wore it?"

"Ralph Ingle, to-day, on his left arm, as if it were a badge to be proud of, — he, the man whose presence I tolerated, whose hateful love-making I permitted. Oh, Christopher, canst thou forgive me?"

"*Forgive?* Dearest, *I love thee!*"

"And canst thou forgive one who cannot lay claim to that mantle of love that covers all sins?"

It was the voice of Giles Brent, who had staggered to the door and stood leaning against the post, a new expression of humility on his proud face.

"Sir Christopher Neville," he went on, "I have been hopelessly wrong, honestly but fatally wrong, and I do most earnestly entreat you who have been so deeply injured to believe in the depth of my grief and repentance."

"You had every reason — " began Christopher.

"Ay, but of what use are faith and friendship but to warm the fires about reason when she

grows too cold. To my life's end I must bear the bitter thought of my injustice, but I pray God the lesson may not be lost. See, here is my sword, a present from Baltimore! If you can find it in your heart to forgive, accept this and wear it."

With his unwounded arm Brent drew the sword with difficulty from its scabbard, and extended it towards Neville. It was a symbol of surrender. Neville took it, and seizing Brent's hand he raised the hilt of the sword, exclaiming, "By this token I swear fealty to my lady, and to all her kindred!"

"Elinor," said Brent, "this Neville is a worthy gentleman, and thou hast made no mistake in giving thy heart into his keeping."

"Amen," said Margaret Brent.

"Ah," said Elinor, jealously, turning swiftly toward Margaret, "thou didst never doubt him; thou canst afford to be proud."

Margaret Brent smiled. "No storm," she said, "no rainbow; no trial, no faith; no faith, no love."

"Mother," broke in Cecil, "wilt thou wed Thir Chrithtopher?"

"If he condescend to ask me again, I surely will."

"Thir Chrithtopher! You do mean to ask her again?"

"Perhaps, some day."

"Couldst not make thy decidence now?"

"Why dost thou seek to hurry me so? Marriage is a serious matter, and who knows but I might regret any undue haste!"

"Nay, now art thou in jest and I in earnest, for we were to have the feast of Candlemas to-night, and there are not candles enough to go round; but if you and Mother are to be one —"

"I do take your meaning, — then one candle will do for both."

"'Xactly."

"In that case, I must waive all scruples, and I do here commit myself to a solemn promise to ask Mistress Calvert to marry me; and, Cecil, I am fain to ask thee for a betrothal gift."

"I know, — the Calvert seal."

"Nay, I have no use for the seal, Cecil, though its motto stood by me well in the dark days last winter. Yes, Elinor, I said them over to myself many a time there in the tobacco-house, — 'Fatti Maschij: Parole Femine, — Deeds for men; words for women.' They may not be read so in the bastard Italian, but so they were writ in my heart, and I said, 'After all, 'tis my life must speak for me. If that condemns me, protests are vain; if that acquits me, who in the end shall be

able to stand against me?' But, Cecil, there is still something I did once decline like a churl when thou didst offer it, and have longed for in secret ever since."

"Oh, you mean Mother's picture; why, of course you may have it, and mine too, which has larger pearls round it, — may he not, Mother?"

"Cecil, what is ours is his."

"And better still, what is his must be ours, so I shall have the bow and arrows without asking. We will have our feast to-night, and we will set out all the candles in the house and deck the table with flowers of purification and the bowl of punch and the seed-cakes."

"*Ave Maria Purificante!*" quoth Father White, who had entered unperceived at the open door. "Sir Christopher, you have borne yourself nobly under the shadow of a great tragedy."

"Tragedy! Nay, the story with a happy ending is not such. My life is no tragedy."

And Christopher Neville spoke truth, for the only real tragedy is the degeneration of the soul under misfortune, and the only real misfortune is that which dominates character.

"Hurrah for Candlemas Day, raid and all!" cried Cecil.

From the street came an echoing cry, —

"Hey for St. Mary's, and Wives for us all!"

As for Christopher, he knelt beside Elinor, and putting his arms about her close he whispered, "Now I have thee for always. Fate itself could not separate us. So thou must e'en make the best of a poor bargain, and take me for a life tenant of Robin Hood's Barn."

THE END.

THE HEAD *of* A HUNDRED

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